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A
LETTER

To the AUTHOR of the
DISCOURSE
OF THE
GROUNDS and REASONS
OF THE
Christian RELIGION,

In ANSWER to
Mr. GREEN's LETTERS, &c. K

With a
POSTSCRIPT

Occasion'd by
Dr. LOBB's BRIEF DEFENCE, &c.

If my [novel] Sense of the Prophecy [Behold a Virgin shall conceive, &c.] will not serve, some other Sense may in Time be found out.

GREEN's Letters, p. 85.
Thou mayst be sure it is true, tho' there should be ten thousand Difficulties objected to thee, which thou art not able to answer.

LOBB's Brief Defence, p. 97.

L O N D O N,
Printed in the Year 1726.
Re-printed in the Year 1737.

A
NETTER

DISCOURSE

OF THE

CHARACTER AND PRINCIPLES

OF THE

CHRISTIAN RELIGION




LONDON

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P R E F A C E.

 H E Delay of the Publication of the following *Letter*, &c. gives me an Opportunity to add something in this Place on Occasion of a new Book of Mr. GREEN's, intitl'd, *A Discourse proving the Resurrection of Christ, and shewing that it is a sufficient Demonstration of the Truth of Christianity.*

I. Mr. GREEN, after observing that the (a) Reader will find a Reflection or two on some Passages in a Discourse of the Grounds, &c. adds, that his taking Notice of this Book, after having lately made some Remarks upon it in five Letters to the Author, does not proceed from any Disrespect to that Gentleman, but a Regard to Truth. And therefore, having been told that I (b) insinuate, says Mr. GREEN, that the said Author is an Enemy to natural Religion, I freely own, that had I been sensible, that my Words would have borne such Construction, I should have express'd myself in a different Manner,

(a) Preface. (b) Letters, p. 26.

Upon which I think it proper to make the following Observations.

1. Writing against a Book, we conceive erroneous, is so reasonable a Thing, has so direct a Tendency to the Information of Men, and is also so kind, civil, and humane in itself, (as implying Good-will to the Author of the Book and to all the World,) that to make an Apology for such Writing, as *not proceeding from Disrespect* to the *Author*, is either charging others with being ridiculously offended, or supposes some *disrespectful* Design or Conduct, which needs an Assurance in Words, that *no Disrespect* was intended, in order to qualify what would probably be deem'd *disrespectful*. But however This be, Mr. GREEN had no Need to make any Apology on Account of the *Author* he opposes; that *Author* being, I am perswaded, not in the least concern'd about *any Disrespect* shewn him, who could not publish such a Work, as he has done, without supposing and despising *Disrespect*; which I own I am surprized to find injures not him in the World's Opinion, but only those, who use it, insomuch, that for their own Sakes they are forced to make Apologies.

2. Professions (and even the most solemn Affeверations) are of no Weight, when Men are under Accusations of Guilt; and Men are to be tried by the Facts, upon which the Accusations are grounded, and not by Professions subsequent to those Accusations. Is there any Difficulty in supposing, that a Man,
who

who does an ill Thing, should endeavour to recover his Reputation by doing another? Men say and do many foolish or ill Things, which they sometimes think to receive Applause for from the World; but finding themselves discover'd, or themselves deceived in their Expectations, they run to Excuses and pretended Intentions, to throw off Guilt; which all Men are backward to own of themselves. And it seems more natural for Men, who have said an ill Thing, to pretend they meant otherwise than their Words import (thereby covering themselves with what cannot be demonstratively disproved) than by acknowledging Guilt; which they think will discover too plainly what Sort of Men they are.

3. Mr. GREEN'S Words having *the Construction*, he mentions, put upon them (I presume by his Friends; and I add by every Body, I have met with, who presently observed the Impertinence and Malice thereof) as the natural *Construction*, or *probable Construction*, ought justly to have that *Construction* put upon them; for Calumny is what Men generally endeavour to disguise a little, at the same Time that they design it to be understood. And he is exceedingly unfortunate, when he intended to be civil, and was absolutely innocent of all Crime, that he should write so, that all Men (his Friends not excepted) should think his Words would bear a *Construction*, that implied the utmost Rudeness and Calumny, whereof they did not think him incapable!

4. As to his Profession, *viz.* that *taking Notice of the Discourse of the Grounds proceeded not from any Disrespect to the Author, but Regard to Truth*, and owning, upon his having been told, that he insinuated the Author of the Discourse to be an Enemy to natural Religion, that had he been sensible his Words would have borne such a Construction, he would have expressed himself in a different Manner; I must observe, that I have been told (since having been told is, it seems, a sufficient Foundation for introducing personal Matters into a theological Controversy) that Mr. GREEN'S Letters were originally fraught with personal Abuses, many of which, upon the Advice of Friends, he struck out, nay, took a Journey to London on Purpose to reform his Work in that Respect, after his Papers had been sent to the Press; and that his Book being all writ in that Spirit, for the Honour of J. C. it seems natural to suppose, either that he should not easily be able to mark or blot out all his Strokes of that Kind (for many such are still left) or else, that he should designedly leave in some few Strokes, for the Reason aforesaid.

II. As to his *Reflection or two upon some Passages in the Discourse of the Grounds*, in the Book before us, I observe, that his first Reflection is, "that (c) there is no Reason to speak (with a late (d) Author) of Jonas's lying three Days and three whole

(c) p. 30.

(d) *Disc. of the Grounds*, p. 10, 11. 83, 84.

" Nights

“ Nights in the Whale’s Belly, and then
 “ coming out of it, as an *Allegory* of
 “ CHRIST’s Resurrection; or to represent
 “ JESUS or his Apostles arguing from it. ”
 He then proceeds to shew, that JESUS did
 not make such Use of it, but argued after
 another Manner from it.

In Answer to which I say,

[1.] *First*, That the *Discourse* of the
Grounds does not represent JESUS, as arguing
allegorically from the Case of JONAS, and
 proving his *Resurrection* from thence, nor
 takes any Manner of Notice of the Use JESUS
 makes of the History of JONAS, but takes
 Notice only of St. PAUL’s arguing *allegori-*
cally from thence. Mr. GREEN’s *Reflection*
 or Argument therefore, if deem’d pertinent
 to the *Discourse*, must stand thus, „ That
 “ JESUS’s using the History of JONAS to
 “ one Purpose, proves St. Paul could not
 “ use it to another Purpose, no ways in-
 “ consistent with the Purpose of JESUS.”

[2.] As to there being *no Reason to repre-*
sent the Apostle’s (That is, St. PAUL) arguing
allegorically from the History of JONAS, in
 Behalf of CHRIST’S RESURRECTION, which
 the *Discourse* represents St. PAUL to do, and
 is the sole Matter in Question; Mr. GREEN
 says not one Word in particular to that Point,
 and consequently has given no Occasion for
 any Reply. However, I will observe in Be-
 half of the *Discourse*, that when the *Dis-*
course speaks of St. Paul’s arguing *allegori-*
cally from the History of JONAS, it speaks

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according

according to the common Interpretation of the (e) Words of St. PAUL, saying expresly, that (f) PAUL *is supposed* (That is, by some of his Interpreters) *to ground* his Assertion, &c. *on the History of* JONAS, as well as from the (g) Necessity of so understanding St. PAUL. And therefore, it would have been as proper for Mr. GREEN to have given us his bare Affirmation against the christian Interpreters, and to have said they had *no Reason*, as to say, that the *Author of the Discourse had no Reason*; and withal, if such an Assertion in the *Discourse* any way impeach'd the Doctrine of CHRIST's *Resurrection*, to direct to the true and original Quiver, from whence that Arrow proceeded, and not to the *Discourse*, which follows those christian Interpreters.

III. His next Reflection is, “ (b) That
 “ CHRIST's Resurrection was the Accomplish-
 “ ment of his own Predictions; and that
 “ Prophecy is represented by the Author of
 “ *the Discourse of the Grounds*, as the best
 “ Foundation, whereon to build any Religion,
 “ who expresly tells us, that *Prophecies in*
 “ *an inspired Book, are, when fulfill'd, such*
 “ *as may be justly deem'd sure and demon-*
 “ *strative Proofs.* And since the *Prophecies*
 “ being deliver'd by an *inspired Person, viva*
 “ *voce*, makes not the least Alteration in the
 “ Argument, the *Resurrection of* CHRIST,

(e) 1 Cor. xv, 4.

(b) p. 31.

(f) *Disc.* p. 10.

(g) *Ibid.* p. 84.

“ being

“ being a *Fulfilling* of his *Prophecies*, is justly
 “ to be *deem'd a sure and demonstrative Proof*
 “ of the Truth of Christianity.”

This *Reflection* is so far from having any Opposition to the *Discourse*, that it is giving it a Sort of divine Authority, and proving from thence, to his (i) *common People*, the certain Foundation of *Christianity*. But if he intends it for a Part of his *Demonstration of Christianity* to the *Deists*, I conceive it defective, without proving the *Inspiration* of the *Person* speaking, (which, one would think, he should know ought not to be taken for granted,) and without proving, that the Prophecies attributed to him, which were not publish'd till long after the (supposed) Accomplishment, were deliver'd *viva voce*, before the said Accomplishment; which will require a Proof of the Authority of the Books of the New Testament. Till he has done That, the Prophecies spoken of will not be *deem'd sure and demonstrative Proofs*; nor will a produced Prophecy and a produced Accomplishment have any Effect on a *Deist*; who, at first View, will suppose the Prophecy invented for the Sake of the Event, or both Prophecy and Event invented. The Force of Prophecy in the Question of the *Messias*, as urged in the *Discourse*, both to prove the Old Testament an *inspired Book*, and to prove JESUS the *Messias*, lies in This, that he accomplishes Prophecies in the Old

(i) *Prof.*

Testament; which is a Book that undoubtedly existed before the Times of JESUS, and cannot have been alter'd since his Times in his Favour, no more than to his Prejudice.

IV. His whole Book may be conceived a *Reflection* on, or Argument against, the *Discourse*. Upon which therefore I will make an Observation or two here, reserving the full Consideration of his Book to another Occasion.

The first Part of his Book, attempting a Proof of the *Resurrection* of JESUS, is nothing to the *Discourse*; nor is it argumentative to *Deists*, who justly want more, and other Proof, than the mere producing *Witnesses* from the New Testament; the Authority whereof they admit not; to say nothing of his Choice, and managing of his *Witnesses* after such a Manner, as tends to discredit, rather than prove the *Resurrection* of JESUS.

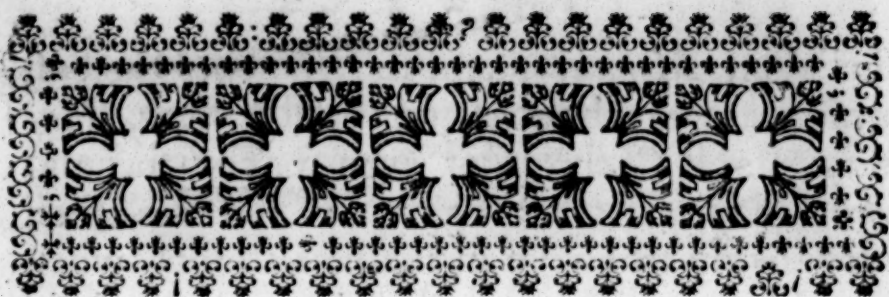
The second Part of his Book, which is both against the *Discourse*, and against the *Deists*, wherein he attempts to shew, that *the Resurrection of Christ* (as before proved by him) *is a sufficient Demonstration of the Truth of Christianity*, is Weakness itself. For in the first Place, he has not proved to the *Deists* the Truth of the *Resurrection* in a Way proper for them. In the next Place, if he had proved it in a proper Way, That is, had made it out by all the proper Topicks to be very probably true, (for That is all the Matter will admit of, and what is only required to be done in Matters of Fact;) yet That would
not

not be *sufficient to prove the Truth of Christianity*, which is a Religion consisting of many Particulars, and all built on the Books of the Old and New Testament. The Antiquity, Authority, and Inspiration of those Books are therefore to be proved; in doing which, their Morality is to be clear'd; their Doctrines shewn to be not inconsistent with Reason; the Dependency of the New on the Old Testament manifested, and in particular the fundamental Article of Christianity, that *JESUS of Nazareth is the Messias*, (or Person foretold in the Old Testament) is the Person there foretold; the Harmony of all their Parts with one another defended; and all shewn to tend to the Glory of God, and Good of Men.—For if these Things cannot be made out; or if any Objections upon these Heads cannot be answer'd; here is not only Want of Proof for some essential Parts of Christianity, but Objections started, which not only destroy that Consistency and Reasonableness, which are necessary Characters of a Religion that comes from God, but, as not being to be answer'd, are Demonstrations of the Falshood of what can only be grounded on Probability.

V. I will conclude this *Preface* with observing; that as the Affair of the Old Testament *Prophecy* is absolutely necessary to be made out in a *Demonstration of the Truth of Christianity*, (the first and fundamental Question in Christianity being, whether *JESUS of Nazareth be the Messias*, That is, *be* the Person foretold in the Old Testament,) and consequently Mr. GREEN'S *Demonstration* defective
for

for Want of making out, from the Old Testament, that *Jesus* is the Person there foretold; so it is the most proper Topick, and most plain Matter, whereon to put the Cause of *Christianity*, and the properest *Test* of its Truth. The Miracles reported in the New Testament to have been wrought; the Gifts of the Spirit said to be pour'd out on the Faithful; and all other Parts of the Evidence for Christianity; are incapable of being consider'd in that just and certain Light, (on Account of the imperfect Knowledge of Things come down to us,) as is the Matter of *Prophecy*; which is most easy to receive Satisfaction about, by seeing whether the *Messias* be prophesied of in the Old Testament, a Book certainly extant before the Times of *JESUS*, and appeal'd to by *JESUS* and his Apostles in numerous Places. In a Word, the Prophecies of the Old Testament, if fulfill'd in the New, are not only Miracles, but such Miracles as are capable of the fullest Proof; and if the Events said in the New Testament to be foretold in the Old be not foretold, the supposed Miracles, of Prophecies accomplish'd, will receive the fullest Confutation. I must own therefore, that Mr. GREEN, and others, who pretend to give a *Demonstration of Christianity*, independent on *Prophecy*, seem to me implicitly to give up *Christianity*, by waving a Point so absolutely necessary to its Proof, and to be no real Friends of Truth, by thus declining the *easiest, most certain and best Way of Trial*, whether *Christianity* be true or false.

A L E T-



A

LETTER

To the AUTHOR of a

DISCOURSE, &c.

S I R,



HERE send you my Animadversions on the *Letters*, which Mr. GREEN has address'd to you, and which, I presume, you will never answer. But yet, it seems proper, that Something should be said to *them*, and that another should defend you against one, who, in some Places, has assaulted you in a most *immoral Manner*. For tho' you may forgive him for those personal Attacks, and charitably judge his Conduct to flow from his Education, and Sort of Religion, and not from any particular Enmity to you, and forbear all Resentment in your own Case; yet his Behaviour ought not to pass unresented by others, if they would shew a just Concern for the most essential Part of Religion,

Religion, *Morality*, and the Branches thereof, which are of the most universal Extent, *Humanity* and *Charity*, or even for the speculative Doctrines of Religion, which are then most likely to be set in the best Light, when the Controvertists keep their Temper, and do not give Vent to any malicious Insinuations, which must necessarily be impertinent to the Argument.

I.

His first Letter is grounded on a Mistake, which runs through it; wherein he represents you as maintaining, that the *(a)* *Apostles* prove the *Facts* of the New Testament by *Passages* or *Prophecies* taken out of the *Old*, and *not* by *Testimony*.

This Matter, which he charges on you, is such an Absurdity in its self, and so clearly excluded by your own express Words from being your Sentiments or Design, and is a Misrepresentation of such a Nature, that I may justly expect to be condemn'd for entering the Lists of Controversy with one, who was capable of it.

Your express Words are, “ *(b)* St. MATTHEW proves several Parts of Christianity from the Old Testament, either by *shewing* them to be Things foretold, as to come to pass under the Gospel Dispensation, or to

(a) Green's Letters, p. 11, 12.

(b) Discourse, p. 5.
be

“ be agreeable to, or founded on the Notions of the Old Testament.” Wherein the Word *proves* (which is a Word he (c) singles out, and builds upon, with Regard to your own Explication thereof in the Words immediately following it) has no Relation to the Proof of any Christian *Facts*, but means, *shewing* those *Facts* (which are supposed Facts, proved in a proper Way, That is, by Testimony) *to be Things* (d) *foretold, as to come to pass under the Gospel-Dispensation.*

But lest this should be mistaken by others, by the Means of Mr. *Green*, give me Leave to explain your Sense yet more distinctly by an Instance; which I will so express, as to make it a Key to this whole Controversy.

1. The fundamental Article of Christianity is, that *JESUS of Nazareth is the Messiah*, or Person promised in the Old Testament.

2. Whether *JESUS of Nazareth* be the *Messiah*, or Person promised in the Old Testament, must be try'd and proved by the Old Testament.

3. That trying and proving from the Old Testament, whether *JESUS of Nazareth* be the *Messiah*, includes in it all proper Considerations of the *Facts* relating to the *Messiahship* of *JESUS*, told in the New Testament. For how, for Example, can the miraculous Conception of the *Messiah*, his Birth at Beth-

(c) *Letters*, p. 11.

(d) *See also Discourse*, p. 25. 33.

lehem, his Miracles, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension, which are some of the *Facts* relating to the *Messiah* told in the New Testament, and supposed to be prophesied of in the Old Testament, be urged as applicable to JESUS, but by producing those *Facts*, as gone through and perform'd by JESUS? And what is producing those *Facts*, but producing those *Facts* attested by good Witnesses?

At the Close of this Letter, he urges a Particular that has a real Opposition to you, and which I shall consider, when I have stated, in your own Words, the Matter, to which he objects.

After you had maintain'd, that if the Prophecies of the Old Testament are fulfill'd in JESUS, then is *(e)* Christianity establish'd on a valid Foundation, you assert on the *(f)* other Side, that if the Prophecies cited from the Old Testament be not fulfill'd, then has Christianity no just Foundation; for the Foundation, on which JESUS and his Apostles built it, is then invalid and false. Nor can, add you, Miracles said to be wrought by JESUS and his Apostles, in Behalf of Christianity, avail any Thing in the Case; for Miracles can never make a Prophecy fulfill'd, which is not fulfill'd, and can never mark out a Messiah, or JESUS for the Messiah, if both are not mark'd out in the Old Testament. And

(e) Discourse, p. 24.

(f) Ibid. p. 28.

you say, that *Miracles, said to be wrought, may be often justly deemed false Reports, when attributed to Persons, who claim an Authority from the Old Testament, which they impertinently alledge to support their Pretences.* Against This Mr. Green argues, that (g) *your fine Reasoning signifies nothing at all, for it serves his Purpose as much as yours.* To make out which he thus proceeds; *If, says*
 “ *he, the Arguments to prove that Jesus*
 “ *rose from the Dead, and that numerous*
 “ *and wonderful Miracles were wrought by*
 “ *him and his Apostles be conclusive, these*
 “ *Things were certainly so; nor can the*
 “ *charging them with laying an invalid Foun-*
 “ *dation for Christianity, making false Infe-*
 “ *rences, misapplying Prophecies, marking*
 “ *out one for the Messiah, who was not*
 “ *mark'd out in the Old Testament, claim-*
 “ *ing thence an Authority without Reason,*
 “ *and impertinently alledging it to support*
 “ *their Pretences, avail any Thing in the*
 “ *Case; for such Things as these can never*
 “ *render That no Resurrection, which was*
 “ *a Resurrection, or those no Miracles,*
 “ *which were Miracles, or those no Facts,*
 “ *which were Facts; can never make a true*
 “ *History false. This, adds he, proves no-*
 “ *thing on either Side, and is no more than*
 “ *to say, that That, which is true, can by*
 “ *no Means be proved to be false.” But in*

(g) *Letters, p. 17.*

the farther Prosecution of his Matter, he, somewhat inconsistently with This, carries his Arguments farther, and supposes, that, when the *Messiahship* of *Jesus* is proved by (b) *Miracles*, such Proof remains good, and cannot be overthrown by any *Objection*, on the Head of Prophecy; which *cannot be answer'd*.

To which I answer,

1. That whether *JESUS* of *Nazareth* be the *Messiah* promised in the Old Testament, can only be try'd and proved from the Old Testament.

2. That *JESUS CHRIST* appealing to the Old Testament, as prophesying of him, it is but Justice to him, to examine him by that *Criterion*.

3. That the Meaning of Books is to be settled by the common Rules of interpreting Books, and not by *Miracles*, which are not *Mediums*, or Rules, to mark out the Meaning of Books; and that when the *Bereans* are commended for *searching the Scriptures*, or Old Testament, to see, whether what the Apostles preached was true, or no, it was for their endeavouring to try the Apostles Doctrine by the Old Testament, interpreted by the common Rules of interpreting Books, and not by the Sense given of those Books by *JESUS* and his Apostles, who are supposed

to have wrought *Miracles* for the Justness of the Sense they had given of those Books; For if *Miracles* had been a just *Medium* to fix the Sense of those Books, there needed no *Search* to find out their Sense, which had already been made evident by *Miracles*; nay, such a Search, as engaging them in the Difficulties supposed and allow'd by Mr *Green* to be in the Affair of *Prophecy*, and of the Citations made out of the Old Testament by the Apostles, would not only have been needless, but have embarrass'd them about a Matter, that was *fully proved* before.

In a Word, is it not exceedingly absurd in the Question of *Transubstantiation*, the Determination whereof depends on the Meaning of these Words, *This is my Body*, to quit the Context, wherein they are found, and to consider, whether *Transubstantiation* be held forth in that Place, from the numerous *Miracles* attested to be wrought in divers Ages of the Church in Behalf of that Doctrine, or by the late *Miracle*, said to be wrought publicly in the City of *Paris*, and attested to by *threescore* chosen *Witnesses*, and publish'd and proclaim'd by a great Christian Prelate, his Eminency the *Cardinal de Noailles*, Archbishop of *Paris*, and believed by every Christian, or not publicly deny'd by any, in the City or Country where it was wrought?

Miracles, though ever so well attested, seem to me so improper a *Medium* in the Case, and to have so little Relation to the Determination of the true Meaning of the Words, *This is my*

Body, that I think no Man is concern'd to enquire, whether they were ever done, or no, or to trouble himself about them, any more than about all the infinite Relations of the like Kind, vented to support the various and contradictory Notions spread throughout the World. The Sense of the Words is plain, as consider'd with their Context, and carry such Evidence along with them against the Doctrine of *Transubstantiation*, as cannot be subverted by any foreign Consideration, much less by any *Facts*, attested and related by *fallible Men*; whose Credibility and Narrations are to be judged of by the Histories we have of their Proceedings in all Ages of the World, and in all Religions, and every Day in the *Roman Church*, which pretends to a constant Power to do Miracles, in this Matter of attested, or *supposed attested* Miracles. It is said, that the Pope lately *cast a Devil* out of a Man possess'd, publicly before his whole Company at *Mafs*; but should he be said to have cast out ten thousand Devils, or to have done any other Miracles, no one ought in the least to be moved by them, so as to think, from them, that the *Mafs* or *Popery* was taught in the *Bible*.

4. That all Parts of the Christian *Scheme* ought to be made out and defended, and especially the fundamental Article thereof, that *JESUS* of *Nazareth* is the *Messiah*, or Person promised in the Old Testament, by those, who propose that it should be rationally received, by insisting on and making good the
several

several Foundations, on which JESUS and his Apostles founded his *Messiahship*, Mission, and Doctrines; and that one Defect in the said *Scheme*, and one Argument against that *Scheme*, which *cannot be answer'd*, affects the whole *Scheme*.

For Example, if it does not appear from the Old Testament, that JESUS, as characterized in the New Testament, is the *Messiah*, promised in the Old, there is no Pretence to proceed a Step farther towards the Maintenance or Support of Christianity; for the Term *Messiah* signifies a Person there described and foretold. And to talk of, and to pretend to believe in JESUS, as the Person promised in a Book, when that Book is not to be our sole Guide and Rule, to know whether he be promised in that Book, or no, is, as appears to me, the greatest Contradiction to common Sense, and the greatest *Satire* upon the *Gospel*, and upon JESUS and his Apostles, for appealing to the Old Testament, that is possible. It implies, that there is one Book, which is to be interpreted differently from all other Books. It implies, that the Matter, for which an *Appeal* is made, is not to be found in the Book. It is flying in the Face of JESUS CHRIST and his Apostles, and declining an *Appeal*, which they make; and, in a word, it discovers a mere pretended Regard to JESUS CHRIST and his Apostles, and a real Regard to nothing but our own Schemes.

Again, if the Resurrection of JESUS from the *Dead*, which is also an essential Part of

Christianity, *first*, as it ought to come to pass as a Fact supposed to be foretold in the Old Testament, and, *secondly*, as it is a Fact testify'd of in the New Testament, cannot be (i) proved true, and defended, Christianity fails. For if such a Matter could be made out to be a Falshood, or to be destitute of Proof, here is such a Weakness, such a Failure in Evidence for Christianity, as supercedes the Consideration of any other Topicks in its Behalf, and, indeed, sufficiently implies, that every other Part thereof must be invalid.

In a Word, as the *Bereans search'd the Scriptures*, or Old Testament, to see, whether what the Apostles taught was founded thereon, or no, and would have acted right in rejecting the Teaching of the Apostles, had they not found it in the Old Testament; so others would no less have acted rightly, in rejecting their Teaching, if the *Resurrection* of JESUS had not been made out to them; for as the Apostle very well argues, (k) *If CHRIST be not risen, then is our Preaching vain, and your Faith is also vain.*

You have consider'd Matters like the *Bereans*, and have search'd the Old Testament, to find out the prophetical Foundation of Christianity; and if you have not *expressly* stated the Affair of gospel Miracles, and particularly the *Miracle* of the *Resurrection* of JESUS, the great *Miracle* of the Gospel; it was because it was needless, and sufficiently

(i) *Letters*, p. 8.

(k) 1 Cor. xv. 14.

obviated by you, and for other manifest Reasons ; but not for the (*l*) Reason assign'd by Mr. GREEN, who pretends, by his Prerogative, to know the Secret of your Heart, as well as the (*m*) Secret of God.

Wherefore, all true Defenders of Christianity must either maintain the whole, or give up the whole.

To pretend therefore, that Miracles are a Proof of the *Messiahship* of JESUS, upon a Supposition, that the *Messiahship* is not, or cannot be made out, from the Old Testament, or that the Test or Proof thereof from the Old Testament may be declined, really implies, either that Miracles are no Proofs of Christianity, (no less than declining, or not being able to prove the Truth of the *Resurrection*, implies Prophecy, and all other Arguments for Christianity, invalid) or else implies the Miracles not done, That is, without just Proof that they were done. And let me add, with Respect to Mr. GREEN, that if the *Messiahship* cannot be made out from the Old Testament, (which is a Supposition only used in the Way of Argument ; for you contend, like all Christians, except one or two of your Adversaries, that the *Messiahship*, is made out from the Old Testament by the Apostles, who endeavour to prove the Jewish Law and History, to be prophetick, or to be a Type of the Gospel) I say, that if the *Messiahship* cannot be made out from the Old Testament,

(*l*) *Letters*, p. 21.

(*m*) *Ib.* p. 4.

there is probably some Defect in Mr. GREEN'S Assertions about those Miracles, who says from the Gospels, that (n) *they were done in the most publick Manner*, (he cannot mean the Resurrection of JESUS from the Dead;) that they were *related by Eye and Ear-witnesses, who had no Ends to serve by imposing on the World, and several of whom laid down their Lives, for the Sake of a Religion, which was founded on the Facts related in them; and who also affirms the Relations of those Facts to have been publish'd at the Time when they were fresh in every Bodies Memories.* I say, a Defect may be supposed in these mere Assertions; which he does not pretend to make out by distinct and clear Proofs, in Relation to the Authors of the Gospels, their Authority, and divine Inspiration; to the Time when the said Gospels were publish'd; to the particular Condition, Callings, Lives, Preaching, Sufferings, and Death of any of the Apostles; tho' I think it became him to do so, against such as he pretends to write against, who, he must know, pay no Manner of Regard to his mere Assertions, and who, I suppose, he must say, would be guilty of a great Fault, if they took any Thing upon Trust from him.

What I have said here, does, as I conceive, subvert and confute all that Mr. GREEN has said any where in his *Letters*, and particularly in his third *Letter*, (which is nothing but a Scene

of Wrangling and Mistakes) upon the Head of *Miracles*, which has any real Opposition to you. And I shall conclude it with the Judgments of three very learned and ingenious Men, the two first whereof are your particular Adversaries, and have a direct View to what you have said in your Discourse about *Miracles*.

(o) Dr. SHERLOCK says *one of the Characters, which our Saviour constantly assumes and claims in the Gospel, is This, that he is the Person spoken of by MOSES and the Prophets. Whether he is this Person, or no, must be try'd by the Words of Prophecy; and This makes the Argument from Prophecy so far necessary to establish the Claim of the Gospel; and it has been very justly, as well as acutely observed, (viz. by the Author of the Discourse of the Grounds) that the Proof of this Point must rely intirely on the Evidence of Prophecy. Miracles in this Case afford no Help. If the Prophets have not spoken of CHRIST, all the Miracles in the World will not prove they have spoken of him. And he says, That as (p) Truth is consistent with itself, so this Claim must be made out, or it destroys all others.*

Mr. SYKES (q) says, “ There are a great
“ many Persons, who conceive, that Christi-
“ anity is sufficiently proved to be true, if the
“ Miracles and Resurrection of JESUS are
“ true; even without any Regard to the Pro-

(o) Sherlock's *Use and Intent of Prophecies*, p. 49. (p) *ib.*
p. 50. (q) Sykes's *Essay on the Truth of the Christian Religion*,
p. 2.

“ *phesies* so often appeal’d to by him. But
 “ supposing the Miracles to be true; yet no
 “ Miracles can prove That, which is false in
 “ itself, to be true. If therefore the *Messiah*
 “ be not foretold in the Old Testament, no
 “ Miracles can prove JESUS to be the *Messiah*
 “ foretold; nay, ’tis a stronger Argument to
 “ prove JESUS to be an Impostor, that he
 “ appeal’d to Prophecies, which were not
 “ Prophecies, and, by that Means, imposed
 “ upon the ignorant People, than ’tis, that he
 “ came from God, merely because he work’d
 “ Miracles. *False Christs and false Prophets*
 “ *may arise, and may shew such great Signs and*
 “ *Wonders, as to deceive, if it were possible, the*
 “ *very Elect, Mat.xxiv. 24.* Yet no one from
 “ thence would argue, that those *false Christs* are
 “ true ones; nor would any one conclude, that
 “ a Man came from God, notwithstanding any
 “ Miracles he might do, if he appeal’d to Scrip-
 “ ture for That, which is no where in it.

“ Besides, what Notions of common Mo-
 “ rality must he have, who pretends to come
 “ from God, and declares that *the Scriptures*
 “ *testify* of him, *John v. 39.* if the Scriptures
 “ do not testify of him? What Honesty,
 “ what Truth, or Sincerity, must he have,
 “ who could *begin at MOSES and all the Pro-*
 “ *phets, and expound unto his Disciples in all*
 “ *the Scriptures, the Things concerning himself.*
 “ *Luke xxiv. 27.* if neither MOSES nor the
 “ *Prophets* ever spoke a Word about him?
 “ The Prophets therefore must be consider’d,
 “ and the Foundation of Christianity must
 “ be

“ be laid on them, or else, to avoid one
 “ Difficulty, we shall be forced into such
 “ Absurdities, as no Man can palliate, much
 “ less can extricate himself out of.”

Lastly, Dr. (r) ALLIX tells us, *that the Design of the four Evangelists is to prove that JESUS the Son of MARY is the promised Messiah; and that in his Birth, his Life, his Doctrine, his Death, and Resurrection, we meet with all the Characters, which the Prophets attributed to the Messiah.* And he says, that (s) *Miracles were to move and dispose Men to the receiving the Truth; but Proofs and Arguments, from the Old Testament, were the proper Means to convince their Hearers of the Truth of it.* And, I humbly conceive, should any one, in Virtue of the Passages cited from these learned Men, attack them as maintaining, that the *Facts* of the New Testament were to be *proved by Prophecy*, and *not by Testimony*, as Mr. GREEN does you, for maintaining the same commonly received Notions in Divinity with them, he would justly pass for a Person incapable of ever understanding Matters of Divinity, unless they would suppose him to have such a just Insight and Knowledge of Mankind, as to know, that he may represent an Adversary as he pleases, speak to one Point when he should speak to another, and indeed say whatever he pleases, either against common Sense or Morality, with the Applause of those, whose Applause only it, perhaps, concerns him to obtain.

(r) Allix's *Reflect. on the Books of the New Testament*, p. 176, 177.

(s) *Judgment against the Unit.* p. 53.

II.

MR. GREEN, in his second *Letter*, proposes to prove against you, that (t) *it is reasonable to receive that Doctrine as divine, which is confirm'd by Miracles*; That is, if he will oppose you, that it is reasonable to receive JESUS for the *Messiah*, on Account of the Miracles wrought by him, without Regard to any Tryal or Proof of his *Messiahship* from the Old Testament. For I do not know that you have asserted any Thing in your *Discourse* upon the Head of Miracles, as Proofs of a divine Authority, but what is said by all Divines of Learning and Understanding, in the Case. You assert, that they are not *absolute Proofs* of a divine Authority, as they all do; but advance nothing against their Force, when consider'd as Proofs or *Motives* in a lower Sense; nay, you suppose, according to the common Notion, that they are, in their Nature, a (u) *Confirmation* of a Mission.

However, tho' Mr. GREEN does not really oppose you, and talks to a Question of his own framing, (which I allow he may through Mistake take to be the Question, as well as invidiously make the Question;) yet he having laid down the general Proposition before-mention'd, and attempted to prove it, we have a Right to expect that Proof from him, as, indeed, we have of every Thing he pre-

(t) *Letters*, p. 26..(u) *Discourse*, &c. p. 34.

tends to advance against you ; for indeed, nothing can be more improper, than to advance so many Things without Proofs, as he does, in *Letters* to you, whom he supposes an Infidel, and must suppose pay no Regard, but That of Contempt to him, for his mere Assertions, as if you were one of his *old Women* ; for whose Edification he seems only to write.

Accordingly I shall consider what he says. He proposes to prove his Point by *easy Steps* in *fifteen* Propositions.

But his whole Proof lies in his *eighth*, which affirms, “ (w) that God may assure us, that
 “ such a Doctrine is a Revelation from him
 “ by some *extraordinary Works*, That is,
 “ *Works contrary to, or besides the known and*
 “ *common Laws, or Course of Nature and Pro-*
 “ *vidence* ; as for Instance, the causing the
 “ Sun and the Moon to stand still in the Midst
 “ of Heaven, or making one Day about as
 “ long as two, as *Josh. x. 13.* There is no
 “ Absurdity in supposing that such *Works* may
 “ be wrought, and for this End, the assuring
 “ Men that such a Doctrine is a Revelation
 “ from God. And if his doing some extra-
 “ ordinary Works is not proper to answer this
 “ End, he does not see any Thing that can be
 “ thought to be so.”

To which I answer, that it is very true, *God may assure us that such a Doctrine is a Revelation from him, by extraordinary Works.* &c. But then it must appear, by some *Rea-*

son, that the said *extraordinary Works* are such *Assurances*, or that That is their Intent and Design. For the *Possibility of God's assuring us of the Truth of a Doctrine by extraordinary Works* is no Proof, that That is, or must be his Method, in Fact, of *assuring us of the Truth of any Doctrine*, and of communicating his Will to us. That is the Thing to be proved by *Reason*, and not supposed; for, if we do not know by *Reason*, that *extraordinary Works* are Proofs of a *Doctrine coming from God*; we cannot know by *Reason* that *extraordinary Works* must be God's Method of *assuring us of the Truth of a Doctrine*. Nothing therefore follows, from the Allowance of this *Possibility*, to his Purpose; and yet I cannot find that he offers at any farther Proof of his Point, unless what he adds is intended for a Proof, that *if God's doing extraordinary Works is not proper to answer this End, he does not see any Thing that can be thought to be so*; which seems a strange Proof; for, what if nothing else *can be thought of* by him or any one else, *proper to answer this End*, does it therefore follow, that That is God's Method of revealing his Will? And tho' he cannot *see* that any other Method *can be thought of*, whereby God can give Proof of revealing his Will, yet I think others may *see* one. And indeed all the religious Sects of the World contend, that God not only may have, but has had, a constant Communication with Mankind, by what they call *internal Revelation, Experiences,*

ences, and *Inspiration*; which is inward Conviction of Mind, and stronger than any traditional Evidence for Miracles can be, or any Evidence of our Senses for *Miracles*, which yet, if proved to be done, we can neither know to be Works of God, nor Proofs of a Doctrine coming from him. And it is surprizing to me, that the reverend Mr. GREEN, who must *openly* pretend he has had a *Call from the Holy Ghost* to the Ministry; who, one would think, should be perswaded, that *the holy Spirit is the greatest Witness to the Truth of the Christian Religion*; and who is of a *Sect* that deals in *Experiences*, and talks much of the *Witness*, or *Testimony*, and *Operations of the Spirit*, should be so little affected with the said Doctrine himself, as to imply, that such Things are not so much as *thought of* by him, when he is talking to you of the Methods, that God may take of *assuring us of the Truth of a Doctrine*; for I dare say he speaks (whatever he thinks) of it, in his Pulpit, and upon other Occasions. But whatever his real Sense may be of *Inspiration*, or of the *Witness*, *Testimony*, and *Operation of the Spirit*, and of *Experiences*, I conceive that they *may* be much better Proofs of God's *assuring us of the Truth of a Doctrine*, than *extraordinary Works*; which, when consider'd as they stand in Fact, were done in an obscure Corner, (where there were numerous (x) Pretenders to perform such ex-

(x) *Bishop of Litchfield's &c. Defence of Christ.* p. 431.

traordinary

traordinary Works,) the Report, and Evidence whereof, reach'd but a little Way; which do not render the Persons, who do them, infallible; for (y) JUDAS, and perhaps some, who had sometimes wrought Miracles by Christ's Commission, did afterwards renounce him, and apostatize from the Faith; and their having been used by God as his Instruments and Messengers did not authorize them for ever after to be accounted such, nor was to give them Credit in all they said, or did: which have been reported and testify'd to be done in Behalf of all Religions; for as Dr. JENKIN observes, (z) *there never was any of the false Religions, but it was pretended to have been confirmed by something miraculous; which can be done by Beings inferior to God, and even by evil Beings, or Workers of Iniquity (who can do such wonderful Works, as would deceive, if possible, the very Elect; That is, all but those, who by being elected must necessarily persevere in Grace to the End, and cannot possibly fall from Grace, or be deceived into an erroneous Belief,)* nay, by SATAN, or the Devil, who can transform himself into an *Angel of Light*; and which are Proofs only of the Power, but not of the Veracity of their Author. In Justification of my assigning *Inspiration*, as a Way that God, if he pleases, may take to give Proof of the Truth of a Doctrine's coming from him, give

(y) Fleetwood's *Essay on Miracles*, 111. *sonabl. of Christ*, Vol. 1. p. 28.

(z) Jenkin's *Rea-*

me leave to produce some *Authorities* in Be-
half of my Opinion; all which will be found,
either to assert the Method of *Inspiration* to
be a better Method for God to reveal his Will,
than the Method by *Miracles*, or *extraordinary*
Works, or to confound the Method by *Mira-*
cles, or to assert the Excellency and Reality
of *Inspiration*, as a Method taken by God to
reveal his Will.

I find the following Clauses, (both in the
Articles of the Christian Religion, approved and
pass'd by both Houses of Parliament, after Ad-
vice had with the Assembly of Divines by Au-
thority of Parliament sitting at Westminster,
printed 1648; and in the *Declaration of the*
Faith and Order own'd and practis'd in the
congregational Churches in England, agreed
upon and consented unto by the Elders and
Messengers in their Meeting at the Savoy,
Oct. 12. 1658.)

“ The Authority of the holy Scripture, for
“ which it ought to be believed and obey'd,
“ dependeth not upon the *Testimony* of any
“ Man or Church, but wholly upon God
“ (who is Truth itself) the Author thereof;
“ and therefore it is to be received, because
“ it is the Word of God.”

“ We may be moved and induced, by the
“ Testimony of the Church, to an high and
“ reverend Esteem of the holy Scripture. And
“ the Heavenliness of the Matter, the Efficacy
“ of the Doctrine, the Majesty of the Style,
“ the Consent of all the Parts, the Scope of
“ the whole, (which is, to give all Glory to
U “ God,)

“ God,) the full Discovery it makes of the
 “ only Way of Man’s Salvation, the many
 “ other incomparable Excellencies, and the
 “ entire Perfection thereof, are *Arguments*,
 “ whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself
 “ to be the Word of God; yet notwithstanding,
 “ our full Perswasion and Assurance of
 “ the infallible Truth and divine Authority
 “ thereof is from the Work of the holy Spirit,
 “ bearing Witness by and with the Word
 “ in our Hearts.”

The learned and acute Mr. BAXTER says,
 (a) he is *much more apprehensive, than heretofore, of the Necessity of well grounding Men in their Religion, and especially of the Witness of the indwelling Spirit; for he more SENSIBLY PERCEIVES, that the SPIRIT is the great WITNESS of CHRIST and Christianity to the World.*

The renown’d Dr. OWEN, a great Divine of the independent Sect, thus treats the Argument for the Truth of Christianity, from *Miracles*, in his *Considerations* upon the *Biblia Polyglotta*, as I find him represented by Dr. WALTON, the Editor of the *Biblia Polyglotta*, in the Defence of that Work, against the said *Considerations*. Dr. WALTON (b) says, “ He
 “ (That is, Dr. OWEN) rejects that main Argument to prove the Scriptures to be from
 “ God, p. 103, 104, viz. the *Miracles*
 “ wrought by MOSES and CHRIST, the

(a) *Reliquiæ Baxterianæ*, p. 127.
Considerator consider’d, p. 22.

(b) *Walton’s Considerator*

“ *Propbets and Apostles, to confirm their*
 “ *Doctrine, brought down to us by the un-*
 “ *doubted Testimony and universal Tradition*
 “ *of the Church of CHRIST,—and sticks*
 “ *not to affirm, that the Alcoran may vie*
 “ *Miracles and Traditions with the Scripture,*
 “ *p. 105. And that there is no more Reason to*
 “ *believe those, who have received that Tra-*
 “ *dition, and plead they have it, before and*
 “ *against them, who profess they have no such*
 “ *Report deliver’d them from their Fore-*
 “ *fathers, p. 108. Nor have we more Induce-*
 “ *ment to give Credit to their Assertions, than*
 “ *to a like Number of Men holding out a Tra-*
 “ *dition utterly to the contrary, That is, why*
 “ *we should believe the Testimony of the*
 “ *whole Christian Church, before the Testi-*
 “ *mony of Jews, Pagans, and Mahometans,*
 “ *to the contrary.”*

The ingenious Author of *Miscellanea sacra*,
 says, (c) “ the Comparison between the State of
 “ Prophecy under the Old and New Testa-
 “ ment, which he has made, to shew where-
 “ in the superior Teaching of the Spirit did
 “ consist; will also shew wherein the *Super-*
 “ *iority of the Witness of the Spirit*, to all
 “ other Testimonies given to CHRIST, did
 “ consist. Our Saviour went about working
 “ Miracles, curing Diseases, and casting out
 “ Devils; yet it might be said by Malice and
 “ Perverseness (perhaps by mere Scepticism,
 “ in some given to doubt) that they did not

(c) *Vol. 1. p. 180.*

“ know the Power of Nature, and therefore
 “ could not judge of a Miracle; that they
 “ did not know what Secrets there might be
 “ for the speedy and instantaneous Cure of
 “ Diseases; and that they could not tell,
 “ whether those few were really dead, that
 “ were said to be raised. And the Blasphemy
 “ against the Son went so far, as to say, that
 “ he cast out Devils by *Beelzebub* the Prince
 “ of Devils; and, possibly some thought, that
 “ his Cures of Diseases, as well as his dispos-
 “ sessed of Devils, was by Charms, and Spells,
 “ and magical Arts, used almost universally in
 “ Medicine in that Age of the World. See
 “ *Acts* xix. 18, 19. And as for working Mi-
 “ racles, curing of Diseases, and casting out
 “ Devils, the heathen Priests and Exorcists
 “ pretended to them; and many among the
 “ *Jews* pretended to some of them. And our
 “ Saviour, as well as his Apostles, foretold,
 “ that there should be false Christs, and false
 “ Prophets; and that they should work such
 “ Signs and Wonders, as, if it were possible,
 “ would seduce the very Elect; and that Satan
 “ should come among those, who received
 “ not the Truth in the Love of it, *with all*
 “ *Power, Signs, lying Wonders*, Matt. xxiv. 24.
 “ 2 Theff. ii. 8, 9, 10. Nay, even as to
 “ CHRIST’S Resurrection, a wicked Imagi-
 “ nation might perhaps strain itself so far, as
 “ to find out some Cavils and Exceptions to
 “ it.—But *the Witness of the Spirit* quite
 “ blunts and deadens all the working of the
 “ most active and sublimated Malice; for is
 “ there

“ there any secret Art, Trick, Slight, or
 “ Power ; or was any such Thing ever pre-
 “ tended to, since the World began ; by which
 “ the Knowledge of Things of the greatest
 “ Compass, Use, and Consequence, can be
 “ infused into the Minds of vast Numbers of
 “ illiterate Men and Women in an Instant,
 “ and the Power given to some of them to
 “ communicate some of those Gifts, but dif-
 “ ferent ones, to all those Believers, to whom
 “ they came without Distinction ; by the lay-
 “ ing on of their Hands? *He adds*, if all this
 “ Illumination, in the several Kinds and De-
 “ grees, in which it was communicated to vast
 “ Multitudes, had nothing in it more than the
 “ Miracles wrought by our Saviour and his
 “ Apostles in his Life-time, and was of the
 “ same Rank and Class with them ; yet inas-
 “ much as it was in many *Instances* of it, and
 “ in the *great Numbers*, to which it was com-
 “ municated, *entirely new*, (none of the Pro-
 “ phets, JOHN the Baptist, or the Apostles in
 “ the Life-time of our Saviour, having ever had
 “ it,) it was the more likely to produce much
 “ greater Effects than any of the other.”

Mr. GREEN, therefore, in asserting *Miracles*
 to be the only Method for God to manifest his
 Will, rejects the Doctrine of the *Witness of the*
Spirit ; and in building Christianity upon the
 Proof of the miraculous Facts contain'd in the
 Gospel in particular, quits the Notions of his
 great Predecessor in the Ministry, Dr. OWEN ;
 who, as appears, argued against such Proof, as
 equally conclusive for all Religions, and made

the great Proof of the Truth of Christianity to lie in the *self-evidencing Power* and *Light* of the *Scriptures* themselves, and of the *Witness* of the *in-dwelling Spirit* within every Man.

But tho' I take the Way of *Inspiration* to be better than the Way of *extraordinary Works*, and can *think* of no better; yet I would no more conclude, that That must be God's Way, if he thought fit, (I say, if God *thought fit*, for I know not (d) *upon what Right we can demand to be told any Thing*) to give Proof of his revealing his Will to Mankind, than I would conclude from God's giving to every Man *Reason*, that there is no Need of, nor can be, any other Way for God to communicate his Will to the World; and, in particular, would not even conclude, that it was absurd to suppose, that God had left us to learn his Will among the infinite Sorts of those, who pretend to be *Ministers of his Word*, and *Ambassadors* from him. On the contrary, I would give every Sort of them a fair Hearing, as to the Proof of their Mission or *Embassy*, how unpromising soever their obvious Figure, Marks, Livery, Appearances, and Pretences may be, of their being sent by the great God of Heaven and Earth.

Mr. GREEN having, as appears, proved nothing, and having supposed the very Thing he was to prove, proceeds to answer the (e) *only Objection, which, as he says, lies against*

(d) *Sherlock's Use, &c. p. 55.*

(e) *Letters, p. 29. his*

his last Proposition, viz. “ That there are
 “ other Beings, besides God, superior unto
 “ us; and we cannot say what Power they
 “ may have of doing the Works we are
 “ speaking of; and consequently, we cannot
 “ tell, when they are the Works of God, and
 “ when the Works of these other Beings.”

How he answers his own *Objection*, I shall now consider, and shew you, that he answers that *Objection* in such a Manner, as to evince, that Miracles, or *extraordinary Works*, are not a Proof of the Divinity of a Doctrine. And then I think nothing will appear less argumentative than his *Propositions*; which pretend only to assert the *Possibility* of their being such Proof, and which *really* shew that they cannot be Proofs. In answer to the *Objection* started by him, he allows, that *Beings, inferior to God, can do extraordinary Works*. How then can we distinguish when God acts, or does *extraordinary Works*, and when *other Beings* do them? He says, *God can give us a certain Criterion*. But what is that *Criterion*, consistently with allowing that *Beings, inferior to God, can do Miracles, or extraordinary Works*?

I. First, he says, the *Works themselves furnish us with this Criterion*, when, in a Contest between two Parties doing Miracles, one Party makes it appear, that the Power, by which he was acted, was superior to That of the other. Thus, he says, in the Contest between AARON and the Magicians of Egypt before PHAROAH and his Servants, both

AARON and the *Magicians* changed their *Rods* into *Serpents*, turn'd the *Waters* into *Blood*, and brought up *Frogs* on the *Land* of *Egypt*. And so far they were on an equal Foot. But at the next Meeting, such Things were done by AARON, that the *Magicians* not being able to imitate them, it appear'd that the Power, by which AARON acted, was superior to That of the *Magicians*, and that such Things were done by AARON, that the *Magicians* themselves were forced to confess unto AARON, THIS IS THE FINGER OF GOD. In Answer to which I say;

1. That, in the Example produced, there is no *Criterion* laid down by Mr. Green to judge, when an *extraordinary Work* is done by God, and when not, but only in the Case of a Contest between two Parties working Miracles for Victory. And we are left exposed to receive all the numerous attested Miracles, wrought among the *Pagans*, when there were no Contests; for it appears, from the Affair before us, that the *Magicians* not only could and did do Miracles, but that they were accusom'd to do them, by their free and confident entring into a Contest of Miracles with AARON, at the Command of PHARAOH.

2. This Victory of AARON over the *Magicians* does no more furnish us with a *Criterion* to judge from the *Works themselves*, that God acted by AARON, than if either AARON or the *Magicians* had singly, or without

out a Contest for Superiority, wrought Miracles.

For if *Beings inferior to God* can do Miracles, as Mr. Green supposes, how can any Body tell, from the Miracles themselves, in a Contest between two Parties, one whereof continues to do Miracles, after the other ceases, and is unable to do more, but that it is a Contest between *inferior Beings*, superior to one another in Power.

3. There can be no Proof, that an *extraordinary Work is a Work of God*, from the *Work itself*, but a Proof, that no other Being can do that Work, besides God. (f) Nor can any Use be made of Miracles, if any one but God could work them—— They could not manifest a divine Power, if any less could work them; nor could they attest to any ones being sent of God, if any other than God could exercise such Power, because they might proceed from one as well as the other. You could not know I came from, and was sent by such a Prince, by my bringing his Seal along with me, if other People had the same Seal, and would lend it to others to use it as they saw fit.

II. Mr. Green offers you a second Criterion, whereby we may know, when *extraordinary Works* are the *Works of God*. And That is contain'd in these Words; (g) *that extraordinary Works, wrought to assure us that*

(f) Fleetwood's *Essay*, p. 11.

(g) *Letters*, p. 33.

such

such a Doctrine is a Revelation from God, are to be look'd upon as the Works of God; or, which is the same Thing in Effect, as done by a divine Power, when the Doctrine they are wrought for the Information of, has a natural Tendency to make Men holy and happy.

To which I answer:

1. First, how does such *Criterion* shew any extraordinary Works to be Works of God, when such Works may be wrought by inferior Beings? Is there any Contradiction in supposing that inferior Beings may propose Doctrines, which interested Men will assert to have a Tendency to make Men holy and happy, and by all Arts and Sophistry maintain and defend, (as the Papists do their Doctrines and Practices, which have the greatest Tendency imaginable to make Men wicked and miserable,) or even may propose Doctrines, some of which, nay all, may have that real Tendency?

2. Secondly, that if extraordinary Works or Miracles are then only to be look'd on, as the Works of God, when the Doctrine they are wrought for the Confirmation of, has a Tendency to make Men holy and happy, then Miracles, as such, do not evince themselves to be the Works of God, and are no Proofs of a divine Revelation. (b) Mere Miracles will signify nothing, nor determine me one Way or

(b) Fleetwood, *Ib.* p. 172.

another. And the making a Doctrine (which, as *tending to make Men holy and happy*, carries its own Proof along with it) a *Criterion*, whereby to judge, that an *extraordinary Work* is a *Work of God*, and a Proof of a Doctrine's coming from him, is to make (i) the Doctrine prove the Miracle, and not the Miracle prove the Doctrine, and to make the Miracle wholly needless. For if Men know that a Miracle is wrought to *confirm a Doctrine*, that has a *Tendency to make Men holy and happy*, they know the Doctrine has that *Tendency*, and have a demonstrative Proof of the *Truth* and divine Authority of that *Doctrine*, and need no other Proof, and especially not such a Proof, as an *extraordinary Work*, which may be done by a *Being inferior* to God, and which has no Force in itself to prove a *Doctrine's* coming from God, but what it derives from that *Doctrine* itself, already demonstrated to be true.

Besides, the Rule, of making *Miracles* then a *Proof of a Doctrine's coming from God*, when the *Doctrines* themselves have a *Tendency to make Men holy and happy*, cannot be applied in the Case of *Judaism* and *Christianity*; both which, as consisting in many *Respects* of merely positive *Doctrines* (some of which have (k) *Objections*, as for Example, the

(i) See Fleetwood, *Ib.* p. 170.

(k) The Reverend Mr. Thomas Bradbury, a Brother-Divine to Mr. Green, and who may be supposed, in representing Christianity,

the Doctrine of the *Trinity*, against them in Point of Reason, which the Advocates for them say cannot be answer'd,) cannot come under that Rule; to say nothing of such Matters, as God's Command to ABRAHAM to sacrifice his Son; the (1) Precept in Relation to human Sacrifices, exemplify'd in particular by the Sacrifice of JEPHTHA'S Daughter; God's directing the *Israelites* to borrow the *Jewels* of the *Egyptians*, that they might detain them for their own Use; the Approbation of JAEL'S killing SISERA in his Sleep, not only contrary to that *Peace*, which was between King JABIN (whose general SISERA was) and the House of HEBER (whose Wife JAEL was) but contrary to the Laws of Protection, and to her own plighted Faith; for she went to *meet* him, and invited him into her House, saying, *turn in, my Lord, turn in to me, fear not*, and SISERA in Confidence of what she said put himself under her Protection; God's sending SAMUEL to anoint DAVID at *Beth-lehem*, and, to prevent King SAUL'S Jealousy of the Intent to dethrone him, bidding him say, he went thither to *sacrifice*; the Prac-

to talk orthodoxly, or according to the Notions of the Divines of his Sect, says (in his *Nature of Faith*, p. 6, 7,) *there are four Things, that may be call'd the chief Practice of the Christians Faith.* 1. *Their Obedience to those Commands, that Reason could not comply with.* 2. *Their Dependance upon those Promises, that Reason could not subscribe to.* 3. *Their continual Regard to Jesus Christ, who to Reason is a Stone of Stumbling.* And, 4. *Their great Repose of Soul upon Heaven and Immortality, which to Reason is all Enthusiasm.*

(1) Lev. xxix. 28, 29.

tice

tice of Men's *selling their whole Estate* and *Substance*, and bringing all Things *in common*; the forbidding *Usury*; the Approbation of *Eunuchism* as the *Way to the Kingdom of God*; the Discouragement of Marriage, and recommending the State of *Virginity* and *single Life*; and divers other such Matters, too long to be enumerated here.

I conclude this Subject of *Miracles* with the Observations of a late most ingenious (*m*) Author. He says, " Perhaps it may be said, " that Miracles *are* a sufficient Evidence and " Criterion of a Revelation from God — " But I would fain know, what Miracles there " are, which may not be wrought by the " Power of some invisible evil Spirits, or malicious and wicked Agents, at least, as to " Appearance, and so as to impose on the " Spectators, beyond their Capacity of detecting the Cheat; and which must then have, " to all Intents and Purposes, the same Effect upon them, as if the Miracles were " true and real? If it be urged here, that as " God himself cannot confirm any false Doctrines by Miracles, so it must be inconsistent with his Wisdom, Truth, and Goodness, to suffer others to confirm any such " Doctrines by false and pretended Miracles, " and thereby impose upon Mankind in a " Matter of such high Consequence, as their " eternal Salvation. It is easy to reply, that

(*m*) Morgan's *Preface to Tracts*, p. 10.

“ This is arguing against Fact and Experience;
 “ for that a very considerable, and perhaps the
 “ far greater Part of Mankind always have
 “ been, and still are, thus imposed on, by
 “ the pretended Miracles of wicked Priests,
 “ and the lying Wonders of *Satan*, is evident
 “ in Fact; and therefore to maintain, that
 “ This cannot be done, or ought not to be
 “ suffer’d, is not to prove the Truth of Doc-
 “ trines by Miracles, but to impeach Provi-
 “ dence, and deny the Perfections of God.
 “ But the Truth is, that the People in Popish
 “ Countries, or wherever Miracles are in
 “ Vogue, are not to blame for not detecting
 “ the Cheats of juggling Priests and designing
 “ Knaves, who impose on their Senses; for
 “ This, perhaps, is what they cannot do; the
 “ Plot may be too close and deep, and the
 “ Design too nice and knavish for them. But
 “ what they are really to blame for, is, their
 “ receiving Doctrines as true and divine,
 “ upon the bare Attestation of Miracles, as a
 “ full and sufficient Proof, without Regard
 “ to the Nature and intrinick Character of the
 “ Doctrines themselves. By this Means, they
 “ are often led into Schemes of Religion,
 “ which, in their whole Frame and Contriv-
 “ ance, discover the evident Marks and Sig-
 “ natures of Superstition and Enthusiasm, or
 “ of Knavery and Imposture; and which
 “ therefore could not be reasonably received,
 “ as coming from God, even though all the
 “ Miracles done from the Beginning of the
 “ World had been wrought to confirm them.
 He

He concludes with a most just Remark, “ *that*
 “ *if* any Doctrines are received *in Virtue of*
 “ *Miracles, as* coming from God, *which*
 “ *Doctrines* are not characterised by the Rea-
 “ son of Things, and the moral Fitness of
 “ Actions, ’tis plain, there can be no possible
 “ Guard against Enthusiasm and Imposture,
 “ nor any Criterion, by which we may dis-
 “ tinguish between Truth and Falshood, or
 “ Right and Wrong, in Matters of Religion.

III.

I proceed to the grand Question, whether there are any Prophecies cited out of the Old in the New Testament, literally or only typically accomplish’d? I say the grand Question; as it is the Question started or begun by you; as it is a Question of the utmost Importance; and as it is a Question, that is the Foundation of all other Questions in Theology, and in Respect of which all other Questions, which you have started, are but Incidents.

Mr. *Green* begins his Proof of literal Prophecies, by asserting, (n) “ that if the Truth
 “ of a Proposition be fully proved, we are ob-
 “ liged to believe it, though we cannot an-
 “ swer every Objection that is brought against
 “ it by a learned and subtle Adversary. For
 “ This we may be sure of, that Truth is not

(n) *Letters*, p. 57.

“ contrary

“ contrary to Truth; and that there must be
 “ some Way or other of answering Objections
 “ against the Truth, tho’ in many Instances,
 “ thro’ the Weakness of our Minds, and our
 “ imperfect Views of Things, we may not be
 “ so happy as to find it out. Supposing there-
 “ fore, *adds he*, that I should not be able to
 “ answer your Objection against Christianity,
 “ taken from the typical, or allegorical Proof
 “ of it; That is, the Proof of it from Pas-
 “ sages in the Old Testament, which are ap-
 “ plied to JESUS, or Matters relating to him
 “ in the New Testament, and which you
 “ think, in their literal, obvious, and primary
 “ Sense, had no Relation at all to these Things;
 “ yet, since, as has been shewn, the Miracles
 “ wrought by JESUS, his Resurrection from
 “ the Dead, and the wonderful Things done
 “ by the Apostles in Confirmation of Christi-
 “ anity, fully prove That is the Doctrine of
 “ God, I should think myself bound to re-
 “ ceive it as such; and thus I must think, as
 “ long as the above-mention’d Arguments to
 “ prove it abide in their full Strength, and all
 “ Attempts to shew their Weakness are vain.

To which I answer,

I. That if there can be such a Thing as a
 Proposition *proved*, that may be liable to an
 Objection [I leave out, *brought against it by*
a learned and subtle Adversary, as a Thing
 wholly impertinent. For would it, for Ex-
 ample, alter the Nature of Mr. Green’s Ob-
 jections to what you think *proved*, to say
 they

they were brought by a learned and subtle Adversary? Does Learning and Subtlety in an Objector, make his Objections bad? Or Want of Learning and Subtlety make his Objections good?) that *cannot be answer'd*, there is then a Demonstration of both Sides, and thorough Scepticism introduced. There would then be no more Reason, to suppose the Truth lay in the Proposition *proved*, than in the *unanswerable Objection*; and consequently there would be no Reason for any Assent at all.

II. Secondly, there can be no such Thing, as a Proposition *proved*, to which an *unanswerable Objection* lies; nor can there be an *unanswerable Objection* to a Proposition, that does not destroy that Proposition.

III. All Defenders of Truth are not only obliged to produce Arguments for their Opinions, but to shew their Consistency with other Truths, by *answering* all *Objections*; and if once Men own they *cannot answer Objections* to their Opinions, they implicitly give up their Opinions. It argues the utmost Weakness of a Cause, for its Advocates to say that they *cannot answer* their Adversaries *Objections*.

IV. But, fourthly, the *Case*, for the Sake of which this Notion, which is so absurd and sceptical, and betrays the Cause it is design'd to advance; the *Case*, I say, will, when consider'd, clearly determine the Point against him. For the Matters supposed to be *proved*, or *fully proved*, are, that they, who *do Miracles*, *fully prove the Truth of the Doctrines*

they deliver ; and particularly, that they do by their *Miracles* prove that they must *interpret* the Old Testament according to its *literal Sense*. Now the *Objection*, which is supposed to be *unanswerable*, is; that the Words of the Old Testament, cited in the New, have visibly not that Meaning, (literally) which the Apostles ascribe to them. Now, in this *Case*, the *Objection* destroys the *full Proof*. For the *full Proof*, first, wholly depends on a Matter that is but merely probable, which is, that the Apostles intended to apply the Passages they cite out of the Old Testament in their *literal Sense*; for it is affirm'd by all Divines, that the Apostles do not always intend to apply all the Passages they cite in their *literal Sense*; and by most Divines, that the *Prophecy* of the *Virgin*, which is the particular *Prophecy* in Question, was not intended to be literally applied by St. MATTHEW; and, secondly, the *full Proof* itself consists only of probable *Mediums*, such as the *Proof* of *extraordinary Facts* done, and that those *extraordinary Facts* done are *Proofs of the Truth of a Doctrine*, and particularly *Proofs*, that the Doers of them must interpret the Old Testament according to its *literal Sense*, when they cite and argue from it.

But the *Objection*, which consists in setting forth the *literal Sense* of the Old Testament in such Manner as is allow'd to be *unanswerable*, is a *Demonstration*, and ought to carry it against the several precarious and probable Matters,

Matters, which are implied in, and make up the *full Proof*; and consequently, the supposed *full Proof* is no *Proof* at all.

However, after this Preliminary, which Mr. GREEN thinks sufficient of itself to confute you, and to prove the true *literal* Sense of the *Prophecies*, cited out of the Old in the New Testament, he proceeds to the Consideration of those *five* produced by you; and begins with the famous one of ISAIAH, of the *Virgin's conceiving*, cited in the first Chapter of St. MATTHEW, which he endeavours to shew does not concern a *Virgin* or *young Woman* in the Time of AHAZ, but concerns the *Virgin MARY's Conception* of JESUS CHRIST, and is so apply'd by St. MATTHEW. This Prophecy I shall therefore here consider, by making certain Observations on what he says, which will confirm the Interpretation given by you of that Prophecy, which is the most common Interpretation, and particularly the Interpretation of the great GROTIUS, and destroy That given by Mr. GREEN. I will only observe, that Mr. GREEN pretends, in his *Exposition* of the said Prophecy, to (n) *walk* in an *unbeaten Path*, which is, I think, a Concession to the Force of your *Objection*; shews the Streights, to which he must think the Cause reduces him; and shews his *Exposition* cannot be just; which, if it had been a probable or possible one, could not have escaped the Interpreters for so many Centuries,

(n) *Letters*, p. 84.

who, it is known, have on this, as well as on all other Occasions, used all the Shifts, which Wit, Learning, and Penetration could furnish them with, or that Zeal and Ignorance could tempt them to use. He adds, that if his *Sense of the Place should have such Objections raised against it*, as he may not be able to answer, *some other Sense may be found out to justify St. Matthew's Application of this Prophecy*. This implies a Distrust, at least, of his own Explication, if it does not imply Guilt in proposing it. It also implies him to be a mere Advocate, and to make Use of any Shifts, without Regard to the Evidence of Things for 1700 Years past, to suppose a *Sense* may yet be found out to serve his Purpose; and it makes his Adversaries in Possession of *seeming Truth*, as Things have always stood, and stand at present.

I. He begins with urging the (o) *Authority* of St. MATTHEW, whose *Interpretation*, he says, is *contrary* to yours.

I. But, first, he ought to know; that GROTIUS, HAMMOND, and the Generality of Interpreters understand, as you do, St. MATTHEW to apply this Prophecy typically; that other learned Men of late suppose, that St. MATTHEW only *accommodates* the Words of ISAIAH to his Purpose; and that he himself confounds all Manner of Certainty in Respect to St. MATTHEW's Intention of a literal Interpretation of ISAIAH, as prophesying of

the Birth of the *Messiah*, by an Observation he makes elsewhere, when he says, (*p*) *the Question is, what is meant by being fulfill'd? We talk, its true, of fulfilling Prophecies; but may not other Things, other Words, other Passages of the Old Testament be said to be fulfill'd, besides the Prophecies or Predictions of future Events?* For by thus supposing the Words, *that it might be fulfill'd*, (used in St. MATTHEW on the citing of ISAIAH) have no Relation to a Prophecy, he subverts the common Sense of a Phrase, which alone or chiefly determines St. MATTHEW to intend the Accomplishment of a Prophecy. He therefore begs the Question, in supposing the *Authority* of St. MATTHEW against you, and might as well urge his *Authority* against those Divines, who interpret St. MATTHEW differently from him, as you do; and he seems to begin, after this Manner, merely to throw St. MATTHEW at you; who may just in the same Manner be thrown at him. For I might urge the *Authority* of St. MATTHEW's Application of the said Passage of ISAIAH (either in the Way of *Type* or *Accommodation*) as of Weight against his *Exposition*, or his *Walk* in an *unbeaten Path*.

2. But, secondly, what is St. MATTHEW's *Authority* to the Point in Dispute, according to his Way of arguing with you? He supposes your Design was to shew, that the Apostles Application of the Prophecies of the

Old Testament was not just and pertinent, and that That is your Meaning, when you assert their Applications of Prophecies not to be according to the literal Sense they bear in their Places in the Old Testament. To what Purpose then is it to quote St. MATTHEW's *Authority* against you, when according to you, as he thinks fit to understand you, your Objection or Notion supposes St. MATTHEW to be against you? Wherein lies the Force of an *Authority* of one against you, when your Design is to attack or confute the Person, whose *Authority* he cites?

II. He says, that King AHAZ (*q*) *refusing the gracious Offer of a Sign* from ISAIAH, (to convince him that he, the said ISAIAH, came with a Message from the Lord to assure him, that the Kings of Syria and Israel, who had invaded Judea, and struck AHAZ and his People with the utmost Consternation, should not succeed in their Design,) he *sees no Reason to think that any Sign was intended to be given to AHAZ.*

But methinks the express Assurance in the Text that ISAIAH did give AHAZ a *Sign*, should be a sufficient Proof that he did so, tho' Mr. GREEN can *see no Reason* for it. For the Text expressly says, upon AHAZ's refusing a *Sign, the Lord shall give you a Sign*, behold a Virgin shall conceive, &c.

But he endeavours at a *Reason*, to shew that no Sign was given AHAZ. This Reason

(*q*) *Letters, p. 62.*

had need be a very plain and good one; when the Text says *the Lord shall give you a Sign*; when the Text names the *Sign*, *behold a Virgin*, &c. which was to be a *Sign* of the Accomplishment of the Matter promised by the Prophet; and when that Sign is afterwards related as actually preceding the said Accomplishment. And this *Reason* ought to arise from the Context, which, as it seems, is as express and plain, that God did give AH AZ a *Sign*, as is possible. But, instead of This, he argues against the Matter expressly asserted by ISAIAH, by saying, “ he can see no Reason to think, that a Sign was intended to be
 “ given to AH AZ ; 1. Because *he* cannot see
 “ that such a Sign was likely to have an-
 “ swer’d any good End ; for there was no
 “ Encouragement to hope, that AH AZ (*who*
 “ *was a (r)* thorough-paced Unbeliever) would
 “ have turn’d his Eyes to any Sign that might
 “ have been given him ; or have spent one
 “ Thought about it. 2. Because if God had
 “ been resolved, however AH AZ carried it,
 “ to have given him a Sign to assure him
 “ that his Enemies should not prevail against
 “ him, he would have done it at the first. And
 “ it seems such an odd Method of proceeding,
 “ first, to make the Person the Offer of a
 “ Thing, *and* then after he, from a vile Princi-
 “ ple, has refused it, to force it upon him,
 “ that he cannot think the wise God acted in
 “ this Manner in the Case before us.”

These *Reasons*, I think, need no Answer, as being grounded on these Suppositions; that Mr. GREEN is fully acquainted with the Will of God, and his Intentions; and that his Conceptions in a Matter, about which he cannot but be much in the Dark, must be the Rule of God's doing or forbearing an Action, and This against an express Assurance, that God did so.

This Way of Interpretation lays the Bible open to all the contradictory and foolish Meanings, which ignorant, weak, enthusiastick, or designing Men can, from their weak Schemes of Things, put upon it. And I do not see, that Mr. GREEN makes any other Use of the Bible, but under the mere Pretence of its Authority to vent his own Whimsies, and make them, and not the Context, the Rule of Interpretation, and That in Opposition to the most express and plain Meaning thereof. I enter not into a Vindication of God's Conduct, in promising and giving a *Sign* to AHAZ upon AHAZ's refusing a *Sign*, against Mr. GREEN's Attacks upon it, as *odd* and *unbecoming* his *Wisdom*. No intelligent Reader can want That, from the Circumstances arising from the Matter, as related in ISAIAH, nor from an hundred Suppositions, which every intelligent Man may make in Favour of what God is actually said to do, nor from that Modesty and Humility, which every Man has in Proportion to his Knowledge. It is sufficient to say, that the manifest Sense of the Text, however *odd* to Mr. GREEN, is against him, and that his Reasoning

Reasoning to fix his Sense on the Text is wholly remote and impertinent in the Case.

His *third Reason* is an Argument taken from the Context. “ It is certain, *says he*, (s) that
 “ the Judgments, that are threaten’d in the
 “ same Breath, with which this Prophecy is
 “ deliver’d, plainly shew that God then had
 “ no Design to comfort AHAZ and his People,
 “ in assuring them, by a Sign, that the Pro-
 “ jects of their Enemies should in a little
 “ Time be confounded. They are indeed
 “ assured of This, but as there is no Sign to
 “ gain Credit to the Assurance of it; so if
 “ you do not interpret the Prophecy we are
 “ considering in the Sense, in which St. MAT-
 “ THEW understood it, ” (That is, according
 to Mr. GREEN, as literally relating to the
 Virgin MARY’s Conception of the *Messiah*,)
 “ this Assurance could do nothing at all for
 “ their Comfort.” He adds, “ It is said in-
 “ deed, *before the Child* (the Prophet point-
 “ ing, we may think, to SHEARJASHUB in
 “ his Hand) *shall know to refuse the Evil and*
 “ *choose the Good, the Land shall be forsaken*
 “ *of both her Kings.* But what Comfort could
 “ This be to AHAZ and his People, (unless
 “ the Passage under our Consideration has an-
 “ other Sense than That you put upon it) when
 “ the next Words are, *the Lord shall bring upon*
 “ *thee and thy Father’s House Days, that have*
 “ *not come, from the Day that Ephraim de-*
 “ *parted from Judah, even the King of*
 “ Assyria! And when in the rest of the Chap-

(s) *Letters*, p. 65.

“ter a depopulating of their Country is re-
 “presented as a Consequence of This.”

In Answer to these Suggestions, which have not the Colour of Argument, and are nothing but Assertions against Fact, I observe, that God had a Design to *comfort AHAZ and his People*, who were under the greatest Conster-nation on the Invasion of the Kings of *Syria and Israel*, and particularly by a *Sign* to assure them that the Design of the two Kings should *come to nothing*.

For, upon the Invasion of the Kings of *Syria and Israel*, the (s) Prophet was sent by God, and order'd to take SHEARJASHUB his Son with him to AHAZ, *whose Heart was moved at it*, as well as the *Hearts of his People*, *as the Trees of the Wood are moved with the Wind*, and say unto him, *fear not, neither be faint-hearted, for the Design of these Kings shall not stand, nor shall it come to pass*. But Abaz not giving Credit to the Prophet, the Prophet *speaks again to Ahaz, saying, ask me a Sign*, to shew that I come to you from God with a Message of Comfort. And upon AHAZ's refusing a *Sign*, the Prophet says, (tho' you refuse a *Sign*,) *the Lord shall give you a Sign; behold a Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call his Name IMMANUEL. Butter and Honey shall be eat, that he may know to refuse the Evil, and chuse the Good. For be-fore the Child, That is, the Child to be born,*

shall know to refuse the Evil and chuse the Good, the Land shall be forsaken of both her Kings. And this plain Account is farther confirm'd in *Isaiab*, as it was also by the Event. For the Prophet (t) took faithful Witnesses, and went unto the Prophetess, (a young Woman, or *Virgin*, whom he took to Wife on this Occasion,) and she conceived and bare a Son, who by the Order of God was also to be call'd MAHER-SHALAL-HASH-BAZ. For before the Child shall have Knowledge to cry my Father and my Mother, the Riches of Damascus and the Spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the King of Assyria. Which is exactly of the same Import with the Promise above cited, that before the Child know to refuse the Evil and chuse the Good, the Land, viz. of Syria and *Israel*, shall be forsaken of both her Kings. So that it is manifest; that God had a Design to comfort AHAZ and his People; that he assured them the Design of the two Kings should not succeed; (which of itself was Comfort) that he did give them a Sign thereof, viz. a young Woman's conceiving a Son; that that Sign, as being immediate and present, and a visible Sign, was suited to the present Occasion of their Fears; that the Event, as related in ISAIAH, confirms this Matter; that the Event of the *Messiah*, a Matter to happen seven or eight hundred Years after, has no Relation to their present Fears; (to say nothing here, that it does not in the least appear from ISAIAH,

(t) Isa. viii.

or from any of the Books of the Prophets, that the Jews had at this Time any Notion of the *Messiah*) and that the *Child*, who was to *refuse the Evil and chuse the Good, before the Land* was to be *forsaken of both her Kings*, was not, and could not be SHEARJASHUB; who, first, does not appear to accompany his Father on this Occasion, and who, if he did accompany his Father, is excluded, from being the *Child* meant, in the plainest Manner. For the Words of the Prophet are, *behold a Virgin shall conceive and bare a Son, and before the Child* (That is, the *Child* to be born of the *Virgin*, according to the immediate preceding Relative, there being not the least Ground to correct the Prophet ISAIAH's Grammar and Context by a mere imaginary Supposition of ISAIAH's leaving so important a Matter, as the *pointing to SHEARJASHUB*, to be found out by Conjecture, in Opposition to the plain grammatical Sense, and That a Supposition, of such a Nature, as, if allow'd and applied, whenever Men have Purposes to serve, will confound the Sense of any Book whatsoever,) *shall know to refuse the Evil and chuse the Good, the Land shall be forsaken of both her Kings*. Nor does the Threat contain'd in the Words immediately following the Affair of the Promise of a *Conception of the Virgin* and the Assurance of the unsuccessful Designs of the two Kings, at all contradict the *Comfort* promised in the Matter of the two Kings, which was That, which then *moved the Heart of AHAZ, and the Hearts of his People, as the Trees of the*
Wood

Wood were moved with the Wind. It is very consistent for God to give Men *Comfort*, as to one particular Evil, about which they have present Apprehensions, and yet to threaten them with another Evil ; and Mr. GREEN's supposed Contradiction seems a most slight Observation to set aside the plain and obvious Sense of the Prophet. Mr. GREEN adds, to support what he has said, “ that (u) it may cast some
 “ farther Light upon this Prophecy, as well
 “ as confirm what he has above observed, to
 “ add, that if God meant to have given AH AZ
 “ and his People a Sign for their *Comfort*, and
 “ to assure them that their Enemies should in a
 “ little Time be confounded, a Virgin's (or a
 “ young Woman's) *conceiving and bearing a*
 “ Son would by no Means answer his End ;
 “ because there was nothing extraordinary in
 “ it. For what Miracle is This, a young Wo-
 “ man's *conceiving and bearing a Son*, in the
 “ natural Way? *Marvellous*, adds he, in the
 “ Way of Ridicule, *is this Work, the Concep-*
 “ *tion and bearing a Child!*” And he observes,
 that This is a Matter, wherein Men may (x)
 guess right. To which it is sufficient to say,
 that This is arguing against, and ridiculing the
 Word of God, and That also by falsifying it,
 when he says, *marvellous is this Work, the*
Conception and bearing a CHILD! when the
 Word of God says a *Son* ; and that it would
 have been more just in itself, and more be-
 coming a Regard to the Bible, to take the

(u) *Letters*, p. 69.

(x. *Ib.* 71.

Fact, as there related, and to observe upon it, that no one could tell with Certainty, except miraculously, first, that a *young Woman or Virgin* should in a short Time *conceive a Child*; and secondly, that that Child should be a *Male*, and live a certain Time. The Text of the Bible is to be taken, as we find it, and to be accounted for as it is, when there is no various Reading, or Pretence for Corruption or Interpolation. Otherwise, we make a mere Nose of Wax of it, and subject it to our Whimsies, Ignorance, Enthusiasms, and Interest.

He adds, by Way of farther Attack on this supposed *Sign*, that it was (*y*) *not suited to the Circumstances*, that AHAZ and his People were in, whose Fears and Distress were present and immediate; and he attacks it for its Impropriety, as you do the Interpretation of it, as a *Sign* to happen eight hundred Years after. As if a *Sign*, given to fall out within a Year's Time, of Relief to happen soon after to the People, to whom the *Sign* was given, was *not suited* to the *present* Circumstances of those People! and as if such a *Sign* was to be parallell'd with a *Sign*, which has no Relation to the present Distress, and is not to take Effect till eight hundred Years after the Generation, to whom it was given, is dead!

III. Mr. GREEN having, as he thinks, proved that the *Prophecy cannot relate to a young Woman in the Days of AHAZ*, proceeds

upon that Foundation, in the next Place, to shew that it relates to the (z) *Virgin MARY and the Birth of JESUS*.

That Foundation I have destroy'd already, by shewing that it wholly consists in interpreting away the plain Text, by mere Chimeras, all inconsistent with the express Letter thereof. I have therefore nothing to do, but to consider merely the additional Arguments here, which he urges to shew it relates to the *Virgin MARY and the Birth of JESUS*.

He (a) says, "every Circumstance, apply'd
" by St. MATTHEW, agrees with the Pro-
" phesy. For MARY was a pure Virgin, (b)
" *knew not a Man*; and the only Person we
" know of, who conceived in such Circum-
" stances. And as JESUS only was born of a
" Virgin, so *he ALONE* could properly be
" call'd IMMANUEL, *God with us*. And of
" him ONLY it could strictly be said, (c) *the*
" *Government shall be upon his Shoulder, and*
" *his Name shall be call'd Wonderful, Coun-*
" *seller, the mighty God, the everlasting Fa-*
" *ther, the Prince of Peace, of the Increase*
" *of his Government and Peace there shall*
" *be no End, &c.* Which are Things evidently
" too high for MAHER-SHALAL-HASH-BAS,
" HEZEKIAH, or any other Person in that
" Age."

These are all the *Circumstances* he urges to prove, that *every Circumstance literally agrees*

(z) *Ibid.* p. 77.
Luke i. 34.

(a) *Ibid.* p. 77.
(c) Isa. ix. 6, 7.

(b) Mat. i. 18.

with the Prophecy. Whereas, he should have produced the whole Prophecy, and shew'd the *literal Agreement in every Circumstance.* But as the whole Prophecy disagrees *literally* in every *Circumstance*, so he enters not into a just and proper Comparison, and confines himself to what seems to have a Shadow of *literal Agreement*; I say, to what seems to have a Shadow of *literal Agreement*, for the *Circumstances* he produces have no real *literal Agreement*.

I. For MARY's being a *pure Virgin*, and *conceiving in those Circumstances*, has no *literal Agreement* with ISAIAH, who speaks only of a *young Woman*, (as appears both by the Context in ISAIAH, and by the Use of the original Word, *Almah*, throughout the Old Testament) who is to *conceive*, and That without the least Intimation of any miraculous or even remote Conception, but on the contrary who was immediately to *conceive*, in order to be a *Sign* to AHAZ *and his People*, and who did, naturally, *conceive a Son*, as it is related in ISAIAH. And the *Miracle* itself of a *pure Virgin's* *conceiving* is well known (tho' Mr. GREEN professes to *know nothing* of the Matter) to have been very frequent; as is shewn by the learned (d) HUETIUS, who gives divers Instances thereof, among the Pagans, to make it credible that the Virgin *Mary* might conceive without the Intervention of Man.

(d) Huetii Alnetanæ Quæst. l. 11. c. xv.

Let me add, that the *Jews*, (tho' they never pretended to found their *Doctrine* (e) of a *Messiah* on a *literal*, but only on the *allegorical* Sense of the Old Testament,) never (f) so much as refer'd this Passage of ISAIAH to the *Messiah*. And Dr. SHERLOCK's (g) Observation seems perfectly just, when he says, "that probably the Prophecy, *a Virgin shall conceive a Son*, was not understood by the antient *Jews* as importing a miraculous Conception; and that common Sense led every Man to understand it in a Sense agreeable to Nature and Experience."

Let me add also an Observation for you, against other Adversaries, that a *pure Virgin's* *conceiving* could of itself be no *Sign* at all to the *Jews*, because no Body can tell, but the *Virgin* herself, whether she conceives miraculously or no. And therefore the *Sign* in ISAIAH must lie in the Conception of a *young Woman* or *Virgin* naturally, which is a visible, manifest, sensible *Sign*; and not in the Conception of a *pure Virgin*, which, being an *invisible Sign*, is no *Sign* at all.

2. As to his Assertion, that *JESUS alone could properly be call'd IMMANUEL, God with us*, I answer that *JESUS* could not *alone* be properly call'd *IMMANUEL*; because that Name was given by God to ISAIAH's *Son*; to whom (h) GROTIUS observes it was applicable by his

(e) Simon *Hist. Crit. du Nov. Test.* p. 247. (f) More's *Mystery of Godliness*, p. 328, 329. (g) Sherlock's *Use, &c.* p. 31. (h) Grotius in *Isa.* vii. 14.

being *God's Sign* to the *Jews* of his *Assistance* to them in their Distress. And if it signify'd in *ISAIAH*, *only*, (That is, *properly*) a *Sign* of *God's Assistance*, it did not signify, *properly*, *only* the Birth and Presence of *God* himself; whom the *Jews* never suspected was to be *born of a Woman*, and could not therefore think to be *properly* signify'd by the Word *IMMANUEL* in that Place. It is the common *Jewish* Way of Speech to give *divine Names* to Things, and Places, on Account of Things done or to be done.

3. As to the third *Circumstance* founded on the *Agreement* of *JESUS* with the Character given of a Person in another Place of *ISAIAH*, what is That to the Prophecy before us? How does an *Agreement* to another Place in *ISAIAH* shew an *Agreement* here? There is not one Word in the Context, where the said Passage stands, to refer it to the *Child* of the *young Woman* in the Prophecy before us. And it is therefore needless to make a just Translation of the Passage here, and shew that it relates to *HEZECHIAH*, especially after the Performances of *GROTIUS*, and our most ingenious Commentator *WHITE*.

Under this Head of shewing an *Agreement* between *MARY'S Conception* in *MATTHEW*, and the *Birth of a Son* in *ISAIAH*, he makes an Objection to himself from the Prophecy in these Words. " *There is*, says he, one Difficulty in my Exposition, which I must account for. *It is expressly said; the Lord himself shall give you a Sign; and what was this*
" *Sign,*

“ *Sign, if not the Virgin's Conception and bearing a Son? For it immediately follows, behold a Virgin shall conceive, &c. and of what could This be a Sign, if not of the conquering the Enemies of Judah? Yet how could a Virgin's Conception and bearing a Son, above seven hundred Years after, be any Sign to the Jews, who lived in the Time of AH AZ.*”

This, which he calls a *Difficulty*, is the manifest Sense of the Place, and utterly subverts his pretended Sense thereof; and nothing can be more absurd than his Conduct, first, to coin a Sense of ISAIAH, founded on Chimeras and Inconsistencies with ISAIAH, and then to consider the real, manifest, and obvious Sense only as a mere *Difficulty*; which as he has taught us, in the Beginning of this Article, has no Weight, though it *cannot be answer'd*, in Opposition to what is *fully proved*, as he will suppose every Thing to be, which he advances, how weak soever it be. This is a most noble Circle of Disputation, and the weak Scheme, into which the Desperateness of their Cause has reduced him and some others, who see but little before them.

But let us consider how he gets rid of the *Difficulty*, and how he shews that the manifest Sense of the Place contain'd in the said *Difficulty* is not the Sense of the Place. He says, “ we may consider the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth Verses (*therefore the Lord himself shall give a Sign; behold a Virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and she shall*

“ call his Name IMMANUEL ; Butter and
 “ Honey shall he eat, that he may know to re-
 “ fuse the Evil, and chuse the Good. For be-
 “ fore the Child shall know to refuse the Evil,
 “ and chuse the Good, the Land that thou ab-
 “ horrest shall be forsaken of both her Kings)
 “ as containing two distinct Predictions; *first*,
 “ that a Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son,
 “ &c. *secondly*, that the Land of the Enemies
 “ of Judah should be forsaken of her Kings,
 “ before SHEARJASHUB should know to re-
 “ fuse the Evil, and chuse the Good ; and one
 “ of these Predictions is certainly made a Sign
 “ of the other, and was to be fulfill’d in Token
 “ that the other should also come to pass in
 “ its Season. Now, the Question is, which
 “ of these Predictions is the Sign of the Ac-
 “ complishment of the other. You suppose
 “ that the Virgin’s conceiving and bearing a
 “ Son is the Sign of the Land’s being forsaken
 “ of both her Kings within such a Time ; but
 “ since I have evidently shewn the Absurdity
 “ of this Supposition, I may reasonably con-
 “ clude, that That, which you look upon as
 “ the *Sign*, is in Reality the *Prediction* to be
 “ confirm’d by the Sign ; and that God, by
 “ the Prophet, does here assure the House of
 “ (i) DAVID, that a Virgin should conceive
 “ and bear a Son, who should be an IM-
 “ MANUEL, GOD *with us*, the *promised Mes-*
 “ *siah*. And since many among them were
 “ staggering through Unbelief at the Promise

“ of God, that the *Messiah* should be born to
 “ the House of DAVID, then in such melan-
 “ choly Circumstances; and since *This* was a
 “ Matter they had never heard of before, and
 “ yet more incredible, *that he should be born of*
 “ a *Virgin*, God kindly tells them, that *This*
 “ should be the Sign of his making good this
 “ gracious Promise, or glorious Prophecy, *the*
 “ *Land of their Enemies should be forsaken of*
 “ *both her Kings before SHEARJASHUB*, to
 “ to whom we may suppose the Prophet
 “ pointed, *should know to refuse the Evil, and*
 “ *choose the Good, though he should eat Butter*
 “ *and Honey*, (have Plenty of Food suitable to
 “ Men of his Age) *that he might be in a*
 “ *Capacity of doing it as soon as possible*. And
 “ thus we have a Sign, according to your De-
 “ fire, *soon coming to pass*, of a Thing to be
 “ perform’d above seven hundred Years to
 “ come.”

In answer to those Parts of *This* not before consider’d, I say,

1. That, instead of answering the *Difficulty*,
 he does nothing but endeavour to confound
 the Order of the Sense and Words of ISAIAH.
 The *Difficulty* is, “ *it is expressly said, the*
 “ *Lord himself shall give a Sign; and what*
 “ *was this Sign, if not the Virgin’s conceiving*
 “ *and bearing a Son? For immediately follows,*
 “ *behold a Virgin shall conceive, &c. and of*
 “ *what could This be a Sign, if not of the*
 “ *confounding the Enemies of Judah? Yet how*
 “ *could a Virgin’s conceiving and bearing a*
 “ *Son, above seven hundred Years after, be any*

“ *Sign to the Jews, who lived in the Time of*
 “ AH AZ.

And he answers by saying, that the Sign is not the Conception of the Virgin, but the Destruction of the Design of the two Kings, which was to be a Sign of the Virgin's Conception seven hundred Years after. Wherein he *expressly* affirms the contrary to what is *expressly* said by ISAIAH ; who, pursuant to the Design of his Commission, which was to assure AH AZ by a Sign that his Enemies should not succeed against him, makes the *Virgin's* Conception to be the Sign of his Success against the two Kings ; and wherein he advances a Scheme wholly remote from the subject Matter. For what can be more remote than This ; the Prophet says to AH AZ, “ You, AH AZ, are afraid of your
 “ Enemies, but they shall not succeed ; and
 “ I will prove it to you by a Sign.” And upon AH AZ's refusing a Sign, the Prophet says, “ *you shall have a Sign ; behold a Virgin shall*
 “ *conceive, &c.*” meaning, according to Mr. GREEN, by those Words *behold a Virgin shall conceive, &c.* no Sign at all, but making that Conception, which is a Matter wholly foreign to the Affair of Success against the two Kings, to be the Thing signify'd, and the Success against the two Kings, which was visibly the Thing to be signify'd, the Sign of an Event (not at all pertinent to the Matter) to happen seven hundred Years after ?

This is manifestly to make the Prophet not talk *ad idem*, and to be guilty of the greatest Incoherence and Rhapsody imaginable, and
 That

That in Opposition to the plainest, most natural and most coherent, and most reasonable Sense imaginable.

And as this Interpretation of Mr. GREEN is to the last Degree inconsistent with the Text, and perfectly wild and enthusiastick; so the Steps, by which he would introduce it, are false in themselves, and entirely without Foundation.

1. First, there is no Colour to make SHEAR-JASHUB the *Child* in Question, but the contrary, as has been shewn already.

2. Secondly, it is an express Contradiction to the Text, to say the *Virgin's Conception and bearing a Son* is not the Sign given by the Prophet, as I have before shewn. It is also, as I conceive, a Contradiction to all other Interpreters, who tho' they interpret the *Virgin* to mean the *Virgin MARY*, yet still, in Conformity with the express Words of *Isaiab*, continue to make the *Virgin* the *Sign* of an intended Event.

3. Thirdly, to talk of the *Jews staggering thro' Unbelief at the Promise, that the Messiah should be born of the House of David in the present Circumstances*, and to build on that Notion, and to comment on the Text as supposing it, when there is so far from being a Word about such *Staggering* in the Matter of the *Messiah*, that there is not a Word, that implies the least Notion of a *Messiah* known to the *Jews* or to ISAIAH himself, is in Reality to say any Thing, and invent any Thing to serve a Purpose, and implies a Liberty to con-

strue a Book to any Purpose whatsoever, in Opposition to the plainest and most obvious Sense.

So that his very Foundation, *viz.* that Success against the two Kings was a *Sign* of the *Messiah*, has nothing to support it, but his mere Imagination; and it is no less absurd to introduce such a Scheme, as the Event of a *Messiah*, than to pervert ISAIAH, by making his *Sign* to be the Thing signify'd, and the Thing proposed by him to be signify'd to be the *Sign*. And I conceive, it is not possible to consider any Person making a more wild Interpretation of a Place, and under greater Distress to account for a Text before him, than Mr. Green; who cannot be allow'd to make sufficient Amends for his Conduct, by a Sort of Ingenuity at the Close, when he supposes, that (*k*) *you, or others, may raise Objections to his Interpretation, which he may not be able to answer*; which Ingenuity he, at the same Time, most inconsistently gives up, by his daring to say, that his Sense *seems* to him *the most natural Sense* of the Place; I say, *daring to say*; for can any Thing be less modest, than to affirm That to be the *most natural Sense* of a Place, which is so manifestly repugnant to the Text, and which he himself gives us as wholly *new*, and which he says may *have Objections to it, which he may not be able to answer*.

You have in your Book cited many great Authorities for your Sense of the Place. To

(*k*) *Letters, p. 85.*

these I could add many more ; but I will content myself with the great Archbishop TILLOTSON ; observing, first, how proper it is to cite Authorities in the Case to one, who uses an assuming and invidious Way of Controversy, in pretending to vindicate St. MATTHEW, and to throw him at you, when the Question is, what St. MATTHEW means, and when the greatest Divines understand St. MATTHEW as you do. (1) *It was foretold*, says TILLOTSON, *that the Messiah should be born of a Virgin, Isa. vii. 14. which you see accordingly fulfilled, Matt. i. That This is not the primary, but the mystical Sense of that Place in ISAIAH, I think may, without Prejudice, be granted to the Jews, who, in innumerable Places of the Old Testament, do, besides the first and literal Sense, allow of a mystical one.*

To conclude this Article ; can any one more expose St. MATTHEW and Christianity to Contempt than Mr. Green has done ; by supposing the Explication of a Prophecy of ISAIAH, that is necessary to defend St. MATTHEW's Application, not *hit* on before That given by him ; and by introducing a *new Exposition* of his own thereof, and That an *Exposition* of such a Nature as, if allow'd, will subject the Bible to any Meaning whatever, that the Weak or Crafty think fit to put upon it ; and by supposing another *Exposition* may be *found out*, in Case his will not *serve* the Turn ? St. MATTHEW has hereby a Defence made for him,

(1) *Sermons, Vol. 13. p. 34.*

which

which may be very remote and perhaps never come, or rather no Defence at all, and is left exposed to an insuperable Objection, or Objection that cannot be answer'd, in order to avoid your *mystical Hypothesis*, if That may be called yours, which you maintain in common with so many learned Divines.

IV.

Mr. Green in his fifth *Letter* proposes to consider the (m) *four* other Prophecies, cited in the New Testament, which you instanced in, as not *literally*, but *typically* and *mystically* apply'd in the New Testament, and upon them to *say as little as may be*.

That *little* I shall answer in less Compass.

I observe on the *first* of these Prophecies, *out of Egypt have I call'd my Son*; that he denies, both in Opposition to most Interpreters (and particularly to the learned Mr. JAMES PEIRCE, who on this Occasion most judiciously says, that (n) "when a Text is cited "in the Manner This is, and it is said such a "Thing was done, *that it might be fulfill'd*, "which was spoken, he always esteems the "Passage cited to be a direct Prophecy of that "particular Event, and that it belongs to that "Event") and to St. MATTHEW himself, that (o) *this Passage is not quoted as a Prediction of any future Event*, I say, in Op-

(m) *Letters*, p. 86. (n) *Paraphrase on the Philippians*, p. 99. (o) *Letters*, p. 91.

position to St. MATTHEW, who expressly says, CHRIST went into Egypt, *that it might be fulfill'd, which was spoken of the Lord by the Prophet, saying, out of Egypt have I call'd my Son*; and that he perverts the Sense of the plainest Expression in the Case, when he says, *that other Things, other Words, other Passages of the Old Testament may be said to be fulfill'd, besides the Prophecies and Predictions of future Events*. So that he is so far from proving this Prophecy to be a literal Prophecy, that, in Opposition to the plainest Words of St. MATTHEW, he denies it to be a Prophecy.

As to the next *Prophecy* cited, viz. "JESUS dwelling at Nazareth, that it might be fulfill'd, which was spoken by the Prophets, *he shall be call'd Nazarene*," he (p) freely owns, *that none of the Prophets have so much as intimated, that the Messiah was to dwell at Nazareth*. And consequently here is no Foundation for supposing a literal Accomplishment of a Prophecy.

As to the *Prophecy* of MALACHI, concerning the coming of ELIJAH, apply'd in the New Testament to JOHN the Baptist, he (q) allows, that the Apostle quits the *literal Sense* of the Prophet, and has Recourse to the *mystical Sense*, which he says, *you ought to shew is unnatural and absurd*. This is also yielding up the Point to you, whose Business it was to shew the Prophecy not *literally*, but *mystically apply'd*, without entering into the

(p) *Ibid.* p. 86. (q) *Ibid.* p. 87, 88.

Question of the *Absurdity* and *Unnaturalness* of *mystical Applications*, which you are so far from pretending to attack, that your Book supposes them to be the Proofs of the Truth of Christianity.

As to the *last* of the *four*, he (r) says, “ he “ may grant, that it is manifest, as you say, “ *that according to the literal Sense, it relates “ to the obstinate Jews in the Time of ISAIAH.* “ But, adds he, what hinders that it may “ not also relate, and in the same Sense, to “ the obstinate *Jews*, who lived in the Time “ of JESUS.” What *hinders* such literal Application is, the Limitation of it, to be met with in the Prophet himself, to a Time to expire long before JESUS came into the World, as GROTIUS understands the Place. And for your Interpretation of it, as not *literally* belonging to the *Jews* in JESUS’s Time, take the Interpretation of Bishop KIDDER. He, in giving Instances of *Accommodations* used in the New Testament, (s) says, “ the Words “ of ISAIAH vi. 9. which were spoken to “ those of his *own* Time, are said to be fulfilled in those, who lived in our *Saviour’s* “ Time and are accommodated to them.”

There is but one Thing more to be considered on the Head we are now upon; and That is, his Objection to you for arguing, from (t) *five Instances* of prophetick Citations made out of the Old in the New Testament, and apply’d, not *literally* but *typically* therein, that all the

(r) *Ibid.* p. 89. (s) *Demonst. of the Messiah.* Vol. ii. p. 216. (t) *Letters*, p. 94. &c.

other Citations are apply'd in the same Manner. *It is*, says he, *no good arguing from Particulars to Universals*. But your Conduct, when justly represented, will vindicate itself, and shew that Mr. *Green* understands not the true Notion of arguing in the Case. You do indeed only give *five Instances* of prophetick Citations made out of the Old in the New Testament, as not LITERALLY but MYSTICALLY apply'd ; rightly judging it not proper to enter into the full and long Detail of all the prophetick Citations. But then you assert, that you *have consider'd the Rest, and find them all apply'd in the same Manner*. And This seems a right Method of proceeding ; and the true Answer to be given to it is, not by saying there is *no arguing from Particulars to Universals*, but to name an Instance to you of a Prophecy *literally apply'd* ; who deny there is any one such ; and who only give *five Instances*, as a Specimen, how the Apostles *apply* the *Prophecies* ; and who should be ready to give an Answer to any Instance, that an Adversary should think fit to alledge.

V.

I now proceed to his *Critique* and Charge upon you, with Respect to your numerous *Quotations* of Authors.

He says, (u) *it is a little odd, that when you admit of no Authority as sacred, you should*

(u) *Letters*, p. 25.

seem so fond of supporting almost every Thing you advance by some Writer or other of Note, and be sometimes carried so far by this Passion, as to apply his Words to a Purpose, that never enter'd into his Thoughts.

But why should it seem odd for you to express your Sense in the Words of some *Writer of Note*? Why may not you argue *ad Hominem*? Does not such a Way of writing produce Attention to you, when, perhaps, otherwise there would be none? Does not the supporting your Notions by the *Authority of Writers of Note* justly obviate and prevent all *invidious* Reflections and Terms of Reproach on Account of the said Notions, which you assert in common with the most learned Divines? And is not Mr. *Green's* Dislike to This, which is undoubtedly an innocent Thing, a Proof that he is concern'd you should appear to be in so good Company, as he probably thinks the Authors, you cite, may be? And why may not you quote STILLINGFLEET and other Authors, as well as Mr. *Green*; who with more Justice may be said to *admit of no Authority as sacred*, than you; for he, as I have observed, determines, from Schemes and Reasonings of his own, what God ought to do, in order to settle a Sense on the Bible, which he cannot make out from the Rules of Grammar and Criticism; and you, in your Book, take every Thing for granted in the Bible, and propose to be determined by the Bible, understood according to the Rules of Grammar and Criticism, without

out advancing any Scheme of your own, as a Rule, to settle the Sense thereof. And whoever will confute you must prove the Bible to be against you; for to That you appeal. It is therefore absurd in Disputation, as well as malicious, to assert you *submit to no Authority*, who *submit to the Bible*, as the Rule, by which to determine your Controversy. Besides, he himself is guilty of the Contradiction of urging you with the Authority of the New Testament for the Sense of the Old; though he attacks you here for *not admitting any Authority*.

As to his Charge against you of *applying the Words of Authors to a Purpose, that never enter'd into their Thoughts*; That, when it is a Misrepresentation of their Sense, is a Fault, and should be own'd and amended, when known. And, in order to it, I shall consider his Attack upon you on this Head.

You have in your Book made, as I take it, several hundred *Quotations*; out of which he, in several Places of his *Letters*, instances in six as *Misrepresentations of the Sense of the Authors* you cite.

1. The (x) Term *Difficulties*, cited by you out of PRIDEAUX, is cited by you in a mistaken Sense. And This I conceive is the only real mistaken Quotation among those, where-with he charges you.

2. The second Quotation, for which he attacks you, (y) *seems* to him to be a *Mis-*

(x) *Letters*, p. 22.

(y) *Ib.* p. 23.

representation,

representation. But, I believe, it will not *seem* so to any Body else. For, tho' *Interpolations* of the Bible, whereof *no Notice* (z) is given, may be deem'd by you *Corruptions*, yet you no where charge those, who allow of *Interpolations*, with allowing *Corruptions*. You know very well, that some of them contend; that those (a) *Interpolations* were made for *compleating the Scriptures*; and that the Authors of them were no less *inspired by the Holy Ghost*, (to make the said *Interpolations*) than the original Authors of those Books, who wrote them in an *incompleat* Manner. And you expressly distinguish between (b) Mr. WHISTON, who speaks of the Bible as *greatly corrupted*, and Dr. PRIDEAUX and others, who speak of it as only *interpolated*, without the least *Insinuation* that the latter take an *Interpolation* to be a *Corruption*. Nor does your *Persuasion*, that an *Interpolation* under the foresaid Circumstance is a *Corruption*, in the least imply that Dr. PRIDEAUX and those others must think so too.

3. His next Instance is a Charge of *Misrepresentation* in Respect of STILLINGFLEET. You cite this Passage, (c) *that Miracles, as splendid Gifts as they are, are no Demonstrations of the Truth*; and for this Citation you refer to Dr. HICKS, whose express Words they are, and to Dr. STILLINGFLEET. But as to Dr. STILLINGFLEET, he is *persuaded*, upon the *Perusal* of his Book, (d) *that there is nothing*

(z) *Disc. p. 121.*
p. 120, 121.

(a) *Letters, p. 24.*
(c) *ib- p. 29.*

(b) *Disc.*
(d) *Letters, p. 25.*
like

like in all his Book. I do not pretend to help his Eyes or his Understanding ; but for others, I refer them to the (e) Section you cite, which is wholly grounded on the Supposition, that Miracles are no *Demonstrations*.

4. You (f) say of FESTUS, mention'd in the *Acts*, that *he was expert in all Customs and Questions among the Jews.* This Mr. Green observes (g) is the Character, in the *Acts*, not of FESTUS, but of AGRIPPA. This is very true, and the Mistake was soon corrected in the second Edition of your Book, long before Mr. Green publish'd his *Letters*. By which it will appear to be a mere Error of the Printer or Transcriber entering wrong a marginal Passage.

5. His next Instance is a Charge of mistaking (h) Dean STANHOPE in Relation to what he says of *Miracles*. He denies not the Words to be rightly cited by you. And, as to the Sense of them, he acknowledges, that the Dean *speaking against those, who look on Miracles as the adequate and sole Foundation of Faith, seems in the Passage to advance the Argument for Christianity from Prophecy to the Prejudice of the Argument for it from Miracles*; and that the Dean was not sufficiently cautious in expressing himself. And he urges another Passage out of the Dean to prove the Dean's Want of Caution, and that you have mistaken his Meaning. But that Passage has

(e) Orig. *Sacræ l.* 11. c. 6. f. 16
(g) *Letters*, p. 5.

(h) *Ib.* p. 52.

(f) *Disc.* p. 150.

no Opposition to the former, as it is understood by you ; and as it is meant by the Dean, for there is no Colour for Mr. *Green* to attack the Dean for *incautiously expressing himself*. It is very odd for Mr. *Green* to charge you with *Misrepresentations* of a Person, whom he corrects, as *expressing himself incautiously*, or agreeably to your Sense, and then to make your *Misrepresentation* of him to lie in not understanding him, according to his unjust (or even just) Correction of him.

6. His sixth and last Instance is a Charge of mistaking again Dean STANHOPE, whom you (i) cite for saying, *'tis possible in the Consideration of single Prophecies to find some other Event* (besides JESUS and the Matters relating to him) *to which these might be adapted without great Violence to the Text*, and whom you understand as speaking therein of *every individual Prophecy*. And can any Thing be plainer, or more universally express'd and to your Purpose, than his Assertion? And the Passage immediately subjoin'd by the Dean, and cited by Mr. *Green*, as inconsistent with the Dean's affirming, what you suppose he does of *every individual Prophecy*, is so far from being really inconsistent with such Affirmation, that it proceeds on that very Supposition, as the intelligent Reader may see.

I might, in Return to Mr. GREEN, attack him for his perpetual *Misrepresentations* of Persons and Things ; for I do not recollect, that

(i) *Disc.* p. 40.

he has made one Observation that affects you, (except in Relation to the Word *Difficulties*) but is founded on some Mistake or Misrepresentation, and setting Things in a false Light. This has in great Measure appear'd by my Answer to him ; and that I may not be tiresome, I submit the rest to the Reader. I will only observe, that he neither understands his Adversary, nor even his own Scheme. Indeed, he seems not to know what he is about, but when he is abusive. That Part of *vulgar Theology* he may be allow'd to understand well, as well as truly to practise.

That he does not understand his own Scheme, appears by his talking of Miracles (*k*) *really and seemingly done*, in the Case of AARON and the *Magicians*. Which not only destroys the very Supposition or Being of any Miracles, (for if the (*l*) *Miracles* of the *Magicians* are supposed only to be *seemingly done*, the Authority of the Senses is deny'd, and no Proof can be given that AARON or any Body else ever did *Miracles*) but is particularly inconsistent with the Scheme he himself builds on, which supposes and asserts, that the *Miracles* of the *Magicians* were *really done*.

And that he does not understand your Scheme, appears from his saying, (*m*) *your Business here, if you would do any Thing against Christianity, is to shew that This you call the mystical Sense is unnatural and absurd.*

(*k*) *Letters*, p. 32.
 (*m*) *Letters*, p. 88.

(*l*) See Fleetwood, *ib.* p. 23.

Your Business was, as I think, to prove that the *mystical Scheme* was the *Christian Scheme* of Things (which *mystical Scheme* you have endeavour'd to unfold by Explications taken from the most profound and learned Christian rabbinical Theologers) without the least Design or Thought, as it seems, of labouring to prove that *mystical Scheme* to be *unnatural and absurd*. Nay, I am sincerely persuaded, that you must think such an Attempt to be a needless, and most impertinent Work, as well as inconsistent with your Plan. To have the *mystical Scheme* deem'd *unnatural and absurd*, seems the Design of your Adversaries ; who generally think it so manifestly *absurd and unnatural*, as to conclude you an Unbeliever, for advancing that *Scheme* ; which they think needs no Confutation. In a Word, Mr. Green has plainly *no Ears to hear* ; and till he has got *Ears*, it is impossible for him to judge of Sounds.

Lastly, there is a mistaken Way of arguing (to say nothing worse of it) that runs thro' his whole Disputation. Therein he ought as a *Disputant* to have attack'd *Propositions* in themselves, and not you as an Enemy to *Christianity*, who propose those *Propositions*, not in the Way of Opposition to *Christianity*, but as *Christian Propositions*, and as the Sense of the Bible, which you support by the Authority of the most eminent Divines. *Views* and *Designs* are invisible Things, and, not being the Matters asserted, are not the Subjects of *Disputation*, or Matters in Question,
how

how justly soever they may be imputed. Dean SHERLOCK, when he enters upon his Matter against you, begins in this common theological Way by saying, that you (n) *have taken great Pains to shew, that the Argument from Prophecy for the Truth of Christianity, as managed and apply'd by the Writers of the New Testament, is absurd and ridiculous; and that we may not flatter ourselves with Hopes of Assistance from other Arguments, you give us this Text of PETER, viz. 2 Pet. i. 19. to shew, by the Authority of our own Scriptures, that Prophecy, as bad an Argument as it is, is nevertheless the very best, that our Cause affords; but then he waves this Reflection in the next Words, by saying, but your Views be to yourself, what Truth there is in your Exposition, and Application of this Part of Scripture, we shall soon see; the Dean rightly judging, that his Business was only to dispute against the Things asserted by you.*

Should I, for Example, represent Mr. Green, as writing his *Letters* to you in order to get a little Credit among old Women and a small Livelihood, and to raise the Indignation of the Mob against you; and should I treat his *Exposition* of ISAIAH, as a most pitiful *Project*, and not deserving the raising his Hire or Pay, or indeed any Pay at all, and not proper to stir the Passions of the People, and should say to him, “ Sir, if you would do any Thing “ to merit Credit and Pay, and to inflame the

(n) Sherlock's *Use*, &c. p. 3.

" People, by explaining ISAIAH, against the
 " Author of the *Discourse of the Grounds*,
 " you should give us, out of the inexhaustible
 " Stock of Theology, an Exposition, that fa-
 " vour'd of a more exalted Enthusiasm, and
 " not such an Exposition, so low and flat, and
 " so obviously false, as shews to every Body
 " the utmost Distress you are in to support
 " what you pretend is the Cause of Christianity,
 " and manifestly gives the Advantage in Point
 " of Truth to an *Exposition* (supposed de-
 " structive of *Christianity*) of the Author of
 " the *Discourse of the Grounds*, if that *Ex-*
 " *position* may be call'd his, which is the most
 " common *Exposition*, and indeed the most
 " manifest Sense of the Place." But is such
 a Way of Writing to be justify'd, in any
 Case, except in the Way of Retorsion, to teach
 Men better Morality, and the true Method of
 Disputation?

VII.

I proceed now to the Consideration of a
 Matter, which, though I have reserved for
 a Conclusion of what I shall say, yet was
 the sole End of my writing this Letter. For
 I should never have troubled myself to have
 attack'd his Reasonings, if I had not thought
 fit to have attack'd his *immoral Assault* upon
 you; which I do, not for his Sake, whom
 I do not pretend to make ashamed of it,
 but for the Sake of others, that such Persons
 may be *noted*.

After

After he has laid down these two Propositions; first, (o) *that there is a God*; secondly, *that there is some Duty that we owe unto him*, he adds, *I say Nothing for the Confirmation of those Propositions, because I am writing to one, who has not OPENLY profess'd himself an Enemy to natural Religion.*

In answer to which I observe, *first*, that the Insinuation contain'd therein serves no Purpose of the Controversy. *Secondly*, that if such Liberty be allow'd in Controversy, there is no End of Abuses; and Controversies must be, as indeed they too commonly are, little else besides Scolding. For what Abuses may not be insinuated, if Reports and Imaginations are allow'd to be Grounds sufficient to bring in such foreign Matters; and what are such Matters, but scolding? *Thirdly*, this Insinuation might, on many Accounts, have been let alone; and especially since Mr. Green could not well hope, in Virtue of his (sectarian) Credit, and under the present anti-high-church, anti-presbyterian, anti-popish, anti-hobbian, and truly christian State of Affairs among us, to set the Magistrate or Mob upon you, by his Calumnies. Why should he shew his Willingness to cut a Man's Throat, when he is so impotent? The Spirit of his *Trade or Craft*, or of his *Religion or Irreligion*, must needs be very predominant in him. *Fourthly*, that such Insinuations carry always with them greater Evidence of their Truth in

(o) *Letters*, p. 26.

the Person, who makes them, than in the Person, on whom they are thrown, and ought ever to be retorted. The Truth of which is grounded on one of the most common Observations among Men ; which I will give you in the Words of an ingenious modern Philosopher, who says to a reverend presbyterian Divine, “ how came it into your Mind, that “ a Man can be an *Atheist*? I know DAVID “ confesseth of himself, upon the Sight of the “ Prosperity of the Wicked, that his Feet had “ almost slipp’d into a short Doubtfulness of “ the divine Providence. And if any Thing “ else can cause a Man to slip in the same “ Kind, it is the seeing such as you, who, “ though you write nothing but what is dictated to you by some Doctor in Divinity, to “ break through the greatest of God’s Commandments, (which is Charity) in every “ Line before his Face. — But how, I say, “ could you think me an *Atheist*, unless it “ were, because finding your Doubts of the “ Deity more frequent than other Men do, “ you are thereby the apter to fall into that “ Kind of Reproach? Wherein you are like “ Women of poor and evil Education when “ they scold ; among whom the readiest disgraceful Word is *Whore* ; why not *Theif*, “ or any other ill Name, but because, when “ they remember themselves, they think that “ Reproach the likeliest to be true? ” And this Observation, I shall take Leave farther to support by a Passage from MR. GREEN himself.

self. He is pleased to say, (p) “ it is the Observation of an ingenious Author, *that Truth is always near at Hand, sits upon our Lips, and is ready to drop from us before we are aware.* Of This, he says, you have given us an Instance, p. 29. where you tell us, “ that God can never be supposed OFTEN to permit Miracles to be done for the Confirmation of a false or pretended Mission.”

Upon which I observe, that it seems very extraordinary to suppose such an Origin for any Truth advanced by you ; who may as justly be thought to consider what you say, and to design to *Speak Truth*, as to *Speak it only before you are aware.* And I think such a Reflection, so unjust with Respect to you, must proceed from one, who was well acquainted with the Character of Persons, who have not *Truth* in View, and if it *drops* from them, *Speak it before they are aware* ; and who have in View to *Speak* and *subscribe*, what they are *hired* to *Speak*, as some I know profess to do.

He concludes his last *Letter* with saying, “ that (q) it is his hearty Desire, that you “ would seriously review your own Work “ and be convinced of your Mistakes, and “ so be brought to the Acknowledgement of “ the Truth ;” That is, to what Mr. *Green* thinks the *Truth*, or what he thinks fit to say is the *Truth*.

I cannot in Conscience make him a Wish of the like Kind ; being perswaded, that the

(p) *Letters*, p. 40.

(q) *Letters*, p. 103.

Virtue and excellency of Man, and That, for which he will be rewarded by God, does not lie in being free from *Mistakes*, or in agreeing in Opinion with any Man, but in the *Love of Truth* as such. And therefore, instead of a *hearty Desire*; that he may agree with you or me, or any one else, or may be free from *Mistakes*, my *hearty Desire* is, that he and all Men would be *Lovers of Truth* for *Truth's* Sake, and lay aside *Education*, and *Interest*, and all *Prejudices* in the taking up and maintaining Opinions; which if they do, they cannot hurt themselves by any *mistaken Opinions* they can fall into. *Mistaken Opinions* can hurt none but those, who do not impartially search after Truth.

Having done with Mr. GREEN, I shall conclude to you.

Though the World may excuse you from entering the Lists against Mr. GREEN, and may think it sufficient for a Friend to perform that Part for you; yet it is expected, that something should be said by you to your other Adversaries, and particularly* to the right reverend the Lord Bishop of *Litchfield* and *Coventry*. And I am not without Hopes, that you will answer the publick Expectation, and take the Occasion offer'd you of setting in a just Light the *Question* of a *Messiah*;

* The Author of the Discourse of the Grounds and Reasons, sometime after the first Publication of this Letter, wrote an Answer to the Bishop of Litchfield and Coventry under the Title of the Scheme of Literal Prophecy consider'd, &c.

which,

which, though it be the most important Question in Christianity, and That, upon which whole Christianity is built, has not, that I know of, had that Justice done to it, whereof it is capable, and which you are particularly qualify'd to do to it, by Virtue of your Reading, Observations, Freedom of Mind, Independency of Fortune, and absolute Contempt of any other Interest but That of Truth.

I am, Sir,

*April 23,
1726.*

Your most humble Servant.

P O S T.

P O S T S C R I P T.

SINCE the finishing this Letter. I have received Dr. LOBB'S *Brief Defence*, &c. which I shall make some Animadversions on, as having a View to your *Discourse of the Grounds*, &c.

He says, (r) " there is a modern, sophistical
 " Objection against Miracles being a Proof of
 " the Truth of the Christian Religion, which,
 " *though it* has been well answer'd by some,
 " (*viz*, Mr. Bullock and Mr. Green) he
 " begs Leave to shew the Vanity and Weak-
 " ness of. The Objection, *he says*, is This.
 " That Miracles can never render a Foun-
 " dation valid, which is in itself invalid ; can
 " never make a false Inference true ; can
 " never make a Prophecy fulfill'd, which is
 " not fulfill'd ; can never make those Things
 " to be spoken concerning Christ, which
 " were not spoken concerning Christ ; and
 " consequently, *that the Miracles said to have*
 " *been work'd by Christ, could not possibly*
 " *have been work'd by him ; but must of Ne-*
 " *cessity, together with the whole System,*
 " *both of the Old and New Testament, have*
 " *been wholly the Effect of Imagination and*
 " *Enthusiasm, if not of Imposture.*"

(r) Pref. p. xi.

I. But

I. But where is this Citatiton to be met with, that he calls an *Objection*, which has been well answer'd by Mr. Bullock and Mr. Green. It is not to be found (in their Answers, nor) in your Book, which has only the (r) first Words of the Citation; all the latter Part, which I have put in *italick* Character, being falsly and maliciously added by Dr. LOBB, as if your Words. There is, indeed, a learned (f) Author, who, after quoting your Words, as above recited, adds the Words I have printed in *italick*; but That he does as his own Inference from yours, and not as your Words. But how will That justify Dr. LOBB's making the Citation, as he gives it us, your *Objection*? Is the Representation of your Sense by an Adversary to be taken for a Citation from you, and for an *Objection* of yours? Is This a fair Method of proceeding for a Man, either with your Book in his Hand or at least every where to be seen, to go to an Adversary's Book for an *Objection* of yours; and what is still worse, to an Adversary, who does not pretend to give those Words above recited in *italick* Character, which Dr. LOBB attributes to you, as your Words, but only as his own Inference; and whom therefore the Doctor transcribes, and misrepresents, in order to put a false *Objection*

(r) *Disc.* p. 28.

(f) Clark's *Disc. of the Connection*, &c. p. 6.

and Citation upon you, and to give a malicious Representation of you? Besides, the learned Author himself was manifestly mistaken in his Inference. For how does it follow from these Propositions of yours, “that
 “Miracles can never render a Foundation
 “valid, which is in itself invalid; can never
 “make a false Inference true; can never make
 “a Prophecy fulfill’d, which is not fulfill’d;
 “can never make those Things to be spoken
 “concerning Christ, which were not spoken
 “concerning Christ;” how does it follow, I say, “That the Miracles said to have been
 “work’d by *Christ* could not possibly have
 “been really work’d by him; but must of
 “Necessity, together with the whole System
 “of the Old and New Testament, have been
 “wholly the Effect of Imagination and En-
 “thusiasm, if not of Imposture?” And this Inference, both the learned Author, and Dr. LOBB themselves must judge to be a false Inference, unless they think *the whole System both of the Old and New Testament to have been wholly the Effect of Enthusiasm, if not of Imposture*; for they both own the Premises to be true, and contend expressly with you, (t) “That Miracles can never render a Foundation valid, which is in itself invalid, &c.

This seems a most *dishonest Method* of Proceeding in Dr. LOBB; and I make that Charge here upon him for this Matter; who is pleased

(t) Clark, p. 28. Lobb. p. xi, xii.

to charge his Adversaries with (u) *dishonest Methods*, without assigning one Instance thereof to support his Charge.

II. So much of the Words of the Citation or *Objection*, as are yours, are self-evident Propositions, and are not urged by you as an *Objection to Miracles being a Proof of the Truth of the Christian Religion*, but as an *Objection* to their being a Proof, on the Supposition that the Messiahship of JESUS of Nazareth cannot be made out from the Old Testament. And your *Objection* is rightly understood and confirm'd by Dean SHERLOCK, as a just and Christian Observation, who says, “ (x) whether JESUS is the Person, or no, promised by MOSES and the Prophets, must be tried by the Words of Prophecy; and that it has been very justly, as well as acutely observed, that the Proof of this Point must rely entirely on the Evidence of Prophecy.” Miracles, says the Dean, “ in this Case afford no Help. If the Prophets have not spoken of Christ, all the Miracles in the World will not prove that they have spoken of him.”

So that Dr. LOBB is utterly mistaken in asserting your *Objection* to be an *Objection* against *Miracles being a Proof of the Truth of Christianity*; and moreover, by owning the Truth of your *Objection*, he owns it to

(u) p. vii.

(x) Sherlock's *Use*, p. 94.

be a just Objection to *Miracles being a Proof of the Truth of Christianity.*

III. It should therefore seem needless to consider his Answers to an *Objection*, which he mistakes the Design of, as well as falsely cites. However, let us consider the *three Answers* he pretends to give.

I. His first Answer is, (y) “that indeed
 “no Manner of Arguments can prove That to
 “be true, which is false; or that Founda-
 “tion to be valid, which is in itself in-
 “valid; or a false Inference to be true;
 “or those Prophecies to be fulfill’d, which
 “have not been fulfill’d; or those Things
 “to be spoken concerning Christ, which
 “were not spoken concerning him:” And
 THUS FAR HE AGREES with the OBJEC-
 TOR. But, adds he, “How does it appear,
 “that the Foundation of the Christian Reli-
 “gion is in itself invalid; or that any Infe-
 “rence drawn by CHRIST or his Apostles is
 “false; or that any Prophecy, asserted by
 “CHRIST or his Apostles to have been ful-
 “fill’d, has not been fulfill’d; or that any
 “Thing they say was spoken concerning
 “CHRIST, was not spoken concerning him?
 “None of these Particulars have been proved,
 “and therefore the Objection is groundless
 “and impertinent; and besides, the Allegations
 “to support it have been confuted.”

Herein he gives up the Point; for when he says, *he thus far agrees with the Objector*, he agrees with you in all you say. And as to his asking *how it appears that the Foundation of the Christian Religion is in itself invalid*, &c. what has That to do with the Truth of your Observation? The *Invalidity* of the Foundation of Christianity is not denied in it, (or any where else by you) but is merely supposed here in the Way of Argument; and your Observation is equally true, whethet the Foundation of Christianity be in itself valid or invalid. The *Pertinency* of your Observation, which Dr. Lobb calls *groundless and impertinent*, and Dean Sherlock calls *just and acute*, lies in This; that Miracles prove nothing in the Case of the Application of Old Testament-Prophecies, which are only to be judged pertinently or impertinently applied, from the Consideration of their Sense, as they stand in the Old Testament; much less do Miracles prove any Thing in Case the Prophecies are misapplied.

His second *Answer* is, (z) “ that tho’
 “ no Arguments can prove a Proposition to be
 “ true, which is in itself false; yet Miracles
 “ may confirm a true Testimony, the Truth
 “ of which might not otherwise be so evident;
 “ and may make those Declarations to appear
 “ true, the Truth whereof could not other-
 “ wise be so clearly demonstrated.”

Herein also he yields to the Truth of your *Observation*, and asserts the same Thing you do. And as to his saying *Miracles may confirm a true Testimony, the Truth of which might not otherwise be so evident*; he himself very justly asserts That, as consistent with the said *Observation*; and consequently cannot make that Assertion to invalidate the *Observation*, without being inconsistent with himself. I add, with Respect to the Truth of the Proposition, that *Miracles may confirm a true Testimony, the Truth whereof might not otherwise be so evident*; that if he would make out that Proposition by Reason, he should prove that Miracles (which, as all agree, may be done by Beings inferior to God, and even by evil Beings) are certain Marks of the Veracity, as well as Power of their Author.

His third Answer is, (a) “ that nothing
 “ can be more certain, than that the Christian
 “ Religion was confirm’d by Miracles; that
 “ consequently nothing can be more certain,
 “ than the Truth of the Christian Religion;
 “ (b) and consequently, whatever Doctrine
 “ is confirm’d by this Evidence must be con-
 “ cluded undoubtedly true, notwithstanding
 “ ANY Difficulties, that may attend it.”

To This I reply, that This indeed is contradicting you, and also himself. For if *Miracles will confirm Doctrines, notwithstanding*

ANY *Difficulties* in those Doctrines; they may then confirm Interpretations of the Old Testament, which seem to us (or are) false; and may confirm *Doctrines*, which seem to us contrary to Reason, and to the common Notions of Morality. ANY *Difficulty*, as for Example, a *Difficulty*, which *cannot be answer'd* (as (c) Dr. LOBB elsewhere expresses it) is a *Demonstration* of the Falshood of the Proposition, to which it lies; and it manifestly is so of a probable Proposition or Proposition grounded on probable Evidence, and particularly in the Case of Miracles; which admit only of probable Evidence, that they were ever done, and can in themselves be pretended only to be probable Proofs of the Truth of Propositions. And it can only be probable, that they are probable Proofs of the Truth of Propositions. And if a *Difficulty*, which *cannot be answer'd*, is a *Demonstration* of the Falshood of the Proposition, against which it lies, then to assert that "whatever Doctrine is confirm'd by Miracles must be undoubtedly true, notwithstanding ANY *Difficulties* that may attend it, is all one as to say, that Miracles will prove what is false to be true."

Thus I have consider'd the only direct *Attack*, that Dr. LOBB has made upon you; which, since he was capable of grounding on a false Quotation; a Quotation not to be found in your Book; a Quotation, which, though to

be found in one of your Adversaries Books, is, as it stands there, partly a Quotation from you, and partly an Inference of that Adversary, and by Consequence a false Quotation in Dr. LOBB, even from that Author; and, in fine, a Quotation, so far as it consists of your Words, misrepresented by that Author, who comments falsely upon it; I say, since he was *capable* of This, the Reader may easily imagine, what his Work, wherein he more generally and covertly expresses himself, must be, and how thick set it must be with Mistakes and false Colours. And to his Reader I leave him. I will only add a few *Observations* on some Particulars of this Work, which may be of Use to those, who write after him on the same Argument.

I. That since Men pretend to write against the *Deists*, and to prove the Truth of Christianity to them; and since they pretend, that (d) *there are many solid Arguments, which demonstrate the Truth of it*; it is my humble Opinion, that they should not call upon the *Deists* (e) *to shew that God never bore Witness to the Truth of the Gospel, and that the Evidences, insisted on to prove the Affirmative, never existed*. This puts the *Deists* upon an unreasonable Hardship; who may justly require Proofs from those, who would impose a reveal'd Religion on them; and who may justly think it sufficient, either merely

(d) *Pr. p. v.*

(e) *Ib. see also p. xv, xvi.*

to deny, till Proofs are produced, or to invalidate the Proofs produced. It seems strange to require them to prove the Falshood of a Revelation, (That is, indeed, of every supposed Revelation) which may be offer'd to them! That is, to prove every Body in the wrong they think mistaken!

It is also my Opinion, that in arguing with *Deists*, and in proving the Truth of *Christianity* to them, Men should not argue from the (f) *Facts* or *Miracles*, as related in the New Testament, till they have proved the divine Authority of the Books of the New Testament. Which yet Dr. LOBB does, without offering any other Proof of their Authority, but what is contain'd in these four general Propositions;

1. (g) “ *That* the Writers of those historical Accounts, contain'd in the holy Scriptures, knew them be true. 2. *That* they were Men of known Integrity; and manifestly neither had, nor could have any worldly Interest to induce them to give a false Account of Things; nay, *that* the writing and publishing the Accounts we have in their Books was plainly against their worldly Interest, and expos'd them to many Hazards, and grievous Sufferings. 3. *That*, tho' they publish'd their Accounts, when they might easily have been disproved, if false, yet they were never disproved by any Enemies. 4. *That* the ex-

(f) *Defence*, p. 14. 43: (g) *P.* 13.

“ extraordinary Witness and Testimony of God
 “ not only attended them, but those that
 “ believed their History, and their Doctrine ;
 “ those that obey’d the Gospel, they preach’d,
 “ and embraced the Religion they taught.”

I also conceive it to be no good Manner of arguing with the *Deists*, to prove, that (*b*) *the Christian Religion was confirm’d by the Distributions or Gifts of the Holy Ghost*, and by other *Miracles*, from some of the first *Fathers* of the Church (whom Dr. LOBB quotes from WHITBY) down to the third Century, asserting that the *Gifts of the Spirit* and the Power to do *Miracles* existed in their Times. The primitive Fathers were such Miracle-mongers, and were either so imposed on by the false Relations of others or such Forgers of them ; as that, instead of verifying the Truth of the Miracles they report, they serve only to depreciate the Force of Testimony in the Case of Miracles. (*i*) *Tanta fuit primis sæculis*, says the learned and pious Bishop FELL, as cited by you, *fingendi licentia, tam prona in credendo facilitas, ut rerum gestarum fides graviter exinde laboraverit ; nec orbis tantum terrarum, sed & Dei ecclesia de temporibus suis mythicis merito queratur*. And Mr. DODWEL, who was a remarkable Admirer of the Fathers, as well as most knowing in their Writings, gives This as a Reason for not defending his *Dissertation*

(*b*) P. 26. 38,

(*i*) *Dis. of the Grounds*, p. 27.

concerning the Paucity of the Martyrs, viz. (k) the great Veneration he had for the Goodness and Piety of several of the Fathers, who, he says, were too easy of Belief of Matter of Fact, not sufficiently attested. Besides, I do not see, why Dr. LOBB should confine Miracles to the Beginning of the third Century. For if there is any Truth in ecclesiastical History, Miracles appear to have been more frequent and numerous afterwards, and especially as Popery prevail'd; under which not only numerous Miracles, in all Places, are said to have been done, but are also attested in most ample Manner, and most particular Enquiries have been made into the Truth of the Miracles wrought by them, have been canonized for Saints; as appears by the Acts of their Canonization.

II. Secondly, I conceive that the Writers against the Deists do not argue from a good Topick, when they say, (l) "it is an easy Matter, for Men of Parts and Learning, to puzzle common People in the plainest Cases, and to start Difficulties, and raise Objections against the most evident Truths; and so artificially to put Propositions together, as to make false Conclusions seem naturally to follow from them;" and when they infer from the Evidence they bring in Behalf of Christianity, that Men may be sure of its Truth, though there should be ten thousand Difficulties objected to it, which they are

(k) *Ib.* p. 95.

(l) *Defence*, p. 96, 97.

not able to answer. Will not such Topicks serve any Cause, and may they not be turn'd, with Advantage, upon the Advocates of Christianity ; which has all the Education, all the Interest and Power in these Parts of the World, on its Side ; and consequently, therefore, almost all the *Men of Parts and Learning on its Side, who know how to puzzle the common People in the plainest Cases, and to start Difficulties against the most evident Truths, and so artificially put Propositions together, as to make false Conclusions seem naturally to follow from them, and who, among other Topicks of Persuasion, pretend, that a Man ought to assent to Propositions upon the Proofs they give of their Truth, though there should be ten thousand Difficulties objected, which he is not able to answer?*

III. Lastly, I conceive, that in writing against the *Deists*, they should not be treated as (*m*) *Men of Guilt*, and as in a *dangerous State*, on Account of their supposed Errors, (which ought to be deem'd involuntary) and for *publishing* them to the World. To treat Men after this Manner for Opinions, which they are led into by their Enquiries into the Truth of Things, is stopping all Enquiry into Truth, and subjecting them to a mere *Lobbian* Authority, and, in a Word, putting them into a most irrational and absurd State. For if Men can be *guilty* of Sin, and in a *dangerous State* for any Opinions they take up with, in

Virtue of their *Enquiries*, what *Enquiries* will it be allow'd Men *safely* to make? What Marks, except the Dictates of Dr. LOBB, or others like him, are there, whereby to know, what Opinions may be innocently assented to, in Virtue of Enquiries, and what not? And will not any one, who is so weak as to be terrify'd with the Fear of *Danger* in embracing Opinions, which are the Effect of Enquiry, naturally lay aside all Enquiries, and take up with the Authority of a LOBB for the Opinions he receives? And indeed, if through Fear of *Danger* in Enquiries you lay aside Enquiries, and yet think it necessary to have Opinions, nothing remains but to follow some of the different LOBBs, who will all assure you, that if you will follow their Method, you may be *sure* (n) of being in the right, and of being in a safe State; but that if you take another Method, you will *certainly* be mistaken, and be in a dangerous State.

But what can be more absurd, than for any Man to take such superior Airs to himself, and to assume to himself the sole Right of maintaining and publishing Opinions, and to pretend himself to be *guilty* of no Fault, but praise-worthy in maintaining and publishing his Opinions, and to charge others with *Guilt* for maintaining and publishing their Opinions; who have an equal Right with him, to think for themselves, and who have an equal Right to be thought to pursue Truth, and to be upright

(n) *Ibid.* p. 97.

in their Enquiries, and ought not to be deem'd less upright in their Enquiries, and worse Pursuers of Truth, for subjecting themselves to the Reproach of the Mob, the Bigots, and the Interested, and despising the common (quack) Methods, which are visibly the Way to Power and Wealth? And let me add, that when Men, who are all equal in the Matter before us, pretend to give themselves superior Airs, they lay as just a Prejudice in their Way from being listen'd to, as others do, who pretend to have infallible Medicines, and blame those, who will not receive their infallible Medicines. Modesty 'claims Attention, but Confidence in the Cause justly produces Contempt; and the best and most favourable Construction, that can be put upon all (o) solemn and pathetical Expostulations and Exhortations in the Cause, is to deem them the Effects of *Enthusiasm*, as undoubtedly they sometimes are.

(o) *Ibid.* p. 83. 114.

April 30, 1726.

Addition

Addition to the Postscript.

May 11.

Y Esterday was brought to me a *Review of the Controversy between the Author of the Discourse of the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion and his Adversaries, in a Letter to that Author*; which, I am told, is written by a Minister of the Gospel in the West of England. And I take the Occasion now offer'd me to recommend this Gentleman to you and to introduce him into your Acquaintance. For, in my Opinion, whoever reads him, will be improved in his Morals by conversing with so polite a Person, and in his Notions of Things by attending to the many judicious Observations, which occur throughout his Book. And I cannot but hope for great Good from his Work; as it puts [positive] Religion upon the Foot of Enquiry and Reason, and allows all Men to have an equal Right to publish their Thoughts, in the following remarkably reasonable and equitable Observation offer'd to you. “ I am, *says he*, (p) so far from grudging you the Liberty of proposing any Difficulties relating to Christianity, that I heartily wish it encreased. I think it very unbecoming to claim a Liberty for ourselves,

(p) p. 268.

“ which

“ which are not willing to indulge to others. If
 “ Christianity be not from God, I should re-
 “ joice to see its Imposture detected; but as
 “ This is a Matter of great Consequence, and
 “ as it must be allow’d, that there are confi-
 “ derable Things to be said for, as well as a-
 “ gainst it; so it is but fair to suffer the Evi-
 “ dence on both Sides to be brought into open
 “ Light, and to let the whole Matter be
 “ carefully and impartially consider’d. If
 “ Christianity be a divine Doctrine, you will do
 “ a great Service to it, by giving learned Men
 “ Opportunity of carefully weighing those
 “ Difficulties, that do attend it. If it be not
 “ a divine Doctrine, upon a thorough Ex-
 “ amination of the Matter, This will appear
 “ to all; Mankind will be undeceived, the
 “ divine Honour will be retrieved, and you
 “ will have a fair Opportunity of setting Re-
 “ ligion on a true and solid Foundation; in
 “ which you will be assisted by all candid,
 “ honest, and disinterested Persons.” To these
 most just Thoughts, he subjoins a no less just
 Expectation from you; who, I am sure, in-
 tirely concur with him in the Sentiments
 therein contain’d, concerning the Excellency
 of original, primitive *Christianity*; *Christianity*
 as deliver’d in the Scriptures, and the Difference
 between That and Christianity as taught by
 some *modern Priests* and in the Roman Church.
 “ I am sensible, *Sir*, says he, that the vicious,
 “ the idle, and the interested Part of Christians
 “ are against such a free and impartial Ex-
 “ amination of Things as I here propose; but

“ I

“ I hope you will be so candid as to judge of
 “ the Genius and Spirit of Christianity from
 “ its own Rules, laid down in the original
 “ Writings of the first Disciples of our Lord,
 “ and not from the corrupt Notions, which
 “ Anti-christianism has introduced, and the
 “ Practice of a great Number of weak and
 “ wicked Men, in these latter Ages, calling
 “ themselves Christians. I hope what you
 “ have seen of the Knavery of modern Priests
 “ will not breed a Jealousy in you, concern-
 “ ing the Designs of *the Antients*. I hope
 “ you will not judge of Christianity by the
 “ Genius and Design of Popery, any more
 “ than of natural Religion, by Heathenism,
 “ which are alike Corruptions of true Re-
 “ ligion.”

I have, in my foregoing Papers, cited the
 ingenious Dean SHERLOCK against Mr.
 GREEN and Dr. LOBB, for his Approbation
 of your *Affertion* concerning Miracles being
 no Proof of Christianity of themselves with-
 out Prophecy; *which Affertion* they have both
 thought fit to attack, as anti-christian. Let
 me add two Passages out of the no less in-
 ingenious Author of the *Review*, who says to
 you, “ that he (q) soon submitted to that clear
 “ Evidence, which you produced for Miracles
 “ not being of themselves a sufficient Proof
 “ of Christianity; and now freely owns that
 “ he is more thoroughly convinced of the
 “ Strength of your Reasonings on that Head,
 “ from the Weakness of your Adversary’s;

“ *and that (r) let a Man work never so many*
 “ *Miracles, as long as he did not answer the*
 “ *Characters of the Messias in the Old Testa-*
 “ *ment, the Jews had Reason to reject him,*”
 But it is not only for their Sakes that I send
 you these two Passages of our Author, but also
 to take Occasion to propose the Consideration
 of the Point to the most ingenious and learned
 Author of the late *Miscellanea Sacra*, who says,
 (s) *Christ must then (That is, in Virtue of*
Miracles, &c.) be submitted to, as the Teacher
and the King of God's People ; and all that
the Apostles, his Ambassadors, have taught or
commanded us, from him, or from his Spirit,
must be received with Faith and Obedience,
 “ *though we could not shew one Old Testament*
 “ *Prophecy to relate to him.*” If this Notion
 can be defended against these learned Men (as
 well as against you) I am persuaded the Au-
 thor of *Miscellanea Sacra* can do it ; who has
 all the Talents necessary to defend all defensible
 Points. And if it can be defended, I wish it
 were ; for it seems highly proper to be done at
 a Time, when so many learned Men give up
 the Point to you ; who think it a *Concession* of
 the utmost Importance to you in your Dispute,
 as, it is evident, the Author of the *Miscellanea*
Sacra also does.

(r) P. 6.

(s) Vol. 1. p. 117. it should be p. 200.

F I N I S.

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